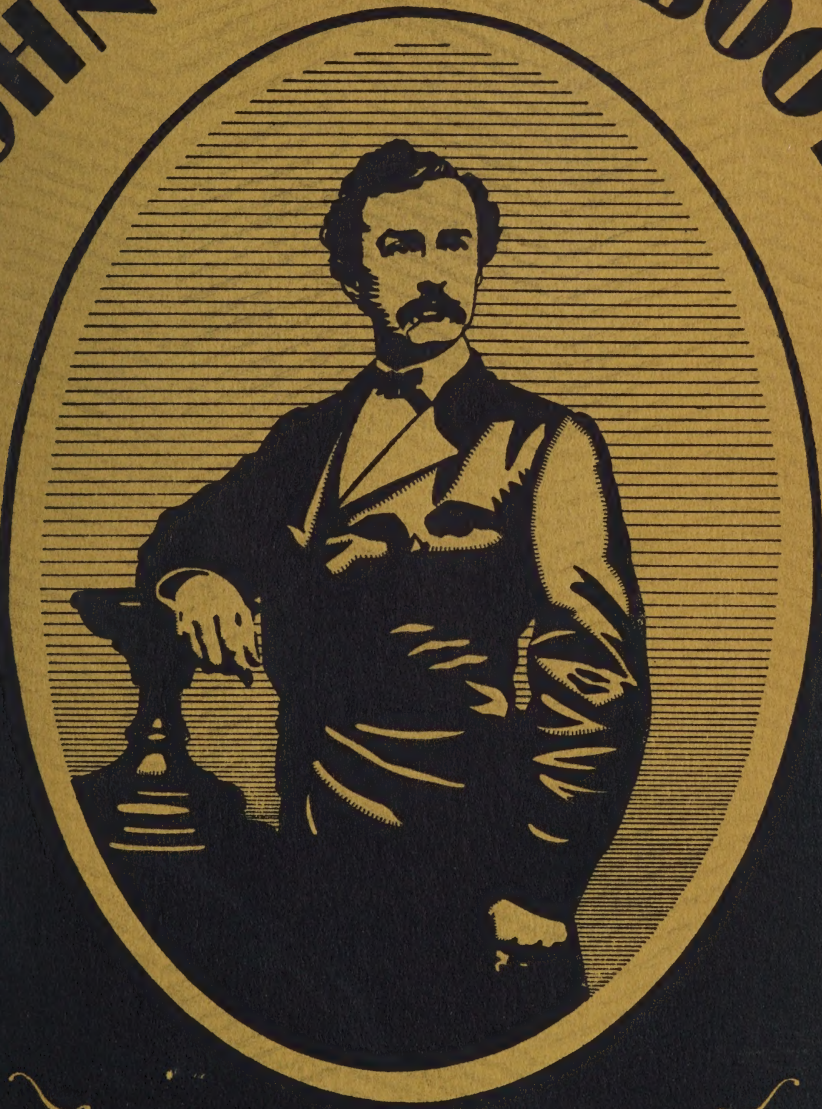
JOHN WILKES BOOTH



FACT AND FICTION OF LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION

BY

FRANCIS WILSON

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JOHN WILKES BOOTH

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By Francis Wilson

AFTER a lifelong study of the subject, and the gathering together of much new material, Francis Wilson has produced the most complete, convincing, and absorbing account of the life of Booth and its fanatic climax which has yet appeared.

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JOHN WILKES BOOTH

FACT AND FICTION OF LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION

FRANCIS WILSON

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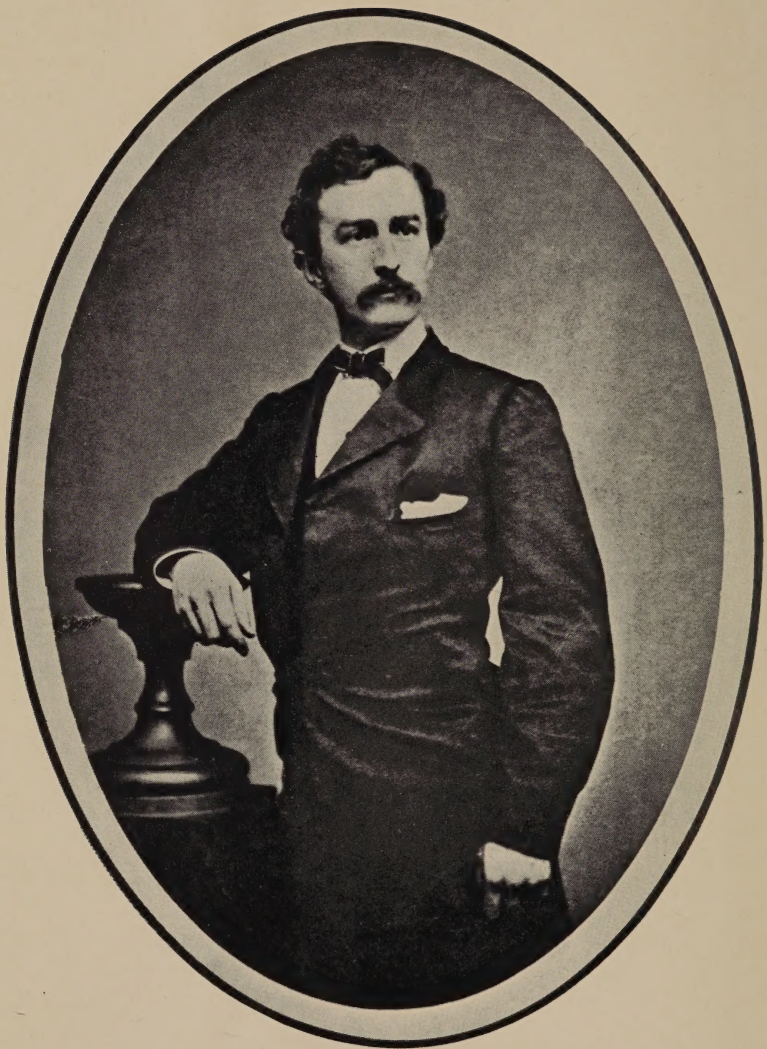

JOHN WILKES BOOTH

This picture of the brother whose mad act almost broke his heart hung by Edwin Booth's bedside at The Players Club

JOHN WILKES BOOTH

FACT AND FICTION OF LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION

BY

FRANCIS WILSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1929

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A mother had sons and daughters. She loved them all. But as is sometimes the case, there was one who seemed a little nearer and dearer than the others — strive as she would to make no distinction.

He was the most affectionate and, yes, the most beautiful of all her sons and daughters. She was his adored one and he was her Absalom. When but a little past his teens, he took his place in the world of art, as she was confident he would, and people called him gifted as well as beautiful. Hers was a soulful pride.

Then came the night, bringing a pall of inky blackness, and spreading sorrow everywhere. The depth of the world's grief at this time we already know. The depth of that mother's anguish was unfathomable. To the memory of that stricken mother, Mary Holmes Booth, this book is dedicated.

Who was John Wilkes Booth? One whose name and reputation will go down to the latest times in this country associated with the most atrocious assassination ever committed.

Let us hope at least that at the bar of that offended God to which he has gone, there will be found some mitigation of his offense. Let us hope at least that his mind was unhinged from its reason, that he had become in the strictest sense such a fanatic as not to appreciate the enormity of the act which he contemplated and committed.

He was a man of polished exterior, pleasing address, highly respectable in every regard, received into the best circles of society; his company sought after; exceedingly bold, courteous, and considered generous to a fault; a warm and liberal-hearted friend, a man who had obtained a reputation upon the stage.

Joseph H. Bradley

Counsel for the Defense in the John H. Surratt Trial

PREFACE

Those who would revive their knowledge of the Civil War should have recourse to the fascinating pages of Rhodes's 'History of the United States.' Those who would know the details of the great tragedy of the nineteenth century, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, will find them amply set forth in the source books of the 'Official Records,' the 'Trial of the Conspirators,' the 'Trial of John H. Surratt,' and the 'Impeachment Trial of Andrew Johnson,' seventeenth President of the United States.

All the worth-while books — and there is a goodly number — written upon this sadly interesting subject of the assassination have for their bases the volumes just mentioned.

The interest, often keen, aroused by the retelling of the historical tale depends largely, of course, upon newly discovered facts and proofs, with the addition here and there of a welcome analysis, deduction, or emphasis, some of which, it is hoped, has been accomplished in the following pages.

At the time of the trial of the conspirators in May, 1865, not only public, but official feeling and opinion ran high. It was felt that John Wilkes Booth and other conspirators were merely the murderous agents of the Southern Confederacy; that men of high principles, like Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet, even men

of such sterling character as Generals Lee, Johnston, and Beauregard, in what was called the Great Conspiracy, were all instigating factors in Lincoln's assassination; that Booth was but a vulgar cut-throat actuated by thirst for notoriety and financial gain. Later, because of seemingly authoritative publications, it has come to be believed by many that he escaped punishment for his crime, and, after years of freedom, committed suicide by taking poison, induced thereto by bitter remorse.

Much has been written to prove and to disprove this, and, as is common with most celebrated cases, much fable has grown up around the Lincoln-Booth tragedy. Simple presentation of the facts, the proofs and warranted inferences should be sufficient to dispel all doubt as to the true story of this exceedingly dramatic event, perhaps the most dramatic in all American history, and, at the same time, clear it completely of any suggestion of fiction.

THE AUTHOR

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JOHN WILKES BOOTH

CHAPTER I

'JOHNNIE!'

'Sad, mad, bad John Wilkes Booth!' was the way he was characterized by Sir Charles Wyndham, who was his intimate, and to whose Hamlet Wyndham played the fop Osric.

But at the time Wyndham knew him, John Wilkes Booth was neither sad, mad, nor bad. On the contrary, he was gay, sane, and, as men went in those days, or in any days, much above the average. Edwin Booth was John Wilkes Booth's elder brother.

The Players was Edwin Booth's last earthly home. He gave it to the people of his profession, reserving for himself during life the third-story front room with an adjoining alcove. He died in the alcove room in 1893.

He was gracious enough to say to the present writer that he liked to see him come to The Players because he brought a smile with him.

'You see, most people talk to me of the past,' he said — 'of my father, and that brings sad memories. You make me think I am still of the present.' Thereafter the writer took great pains to carry him messages of cheer, laden with what humor and gayety he could summon. Not infrequently, of course, there

would be an exchange of anecdotes touching upon the peculiarities of friends and acquaintances in and out of the dramatic calling, of the mishaps of stage and private life and the humor and witticisms that arose therefrom. Edwin Booth was anything but a demonstrative man, and his laugh was mostly smile, always that wistfully expressive smile. Sargent has caught it astonishingly in the portrait painting of the great actor which adorns the walls of The Players.

Booth was also a good auditor, as the writer discovered when he and Lawrence Barrett would make their annual visit to see him play. When anything especially diverting occurred, Barrett would rise swiftly and, pacing the box, laugh openly and heartily. Not so with Booth. Except for short, quick movements of the chest he would sit quietly, with glowing eyes — 'the most wonderful eyes ever seen in any human face in any country,' says Ellen Terry — and with that sad, wan smile so characteristic of him.

On the tall chiffonier in that alcove room still stands the picture of his mother and, in a little recess to the right of the bed, still hangs the photograph of his youngest brother, John Wilkes Booth. When the dreadful intelligence came of the assassination of Lincoln, Edwin Booth understood, as most people understood at the time, that, in the stress of the hour and the inflamed condition of public feeling in both North and South, it was easily conceivable that the leaders of either side in the war, or even of both sides, might meet with violent death at the hands of fanat-

EDWIN BOOTH AS HAMLET

ics; but it was utterly beyond him to imagine that such death would or could be caused by a member of his own family. When he learned that his youngest brother, John Wilkes, had committed the deed, all the astonishment, all the sorrow, all the horror which this man of extraordinary power of expression was capable of portraying was epitomized in his scarcely uttered exclamation of:

'But, Johnnie!'

So almost impossible was it to believe that this gay and handsome youth, who had been the light of his mother's life and the joy of his family, could be guilty of such an atrocious act. True, he had raved of his sympathy with secession and the rights of the South, but he was not alone in that. Many Northerners did the same and were not too severely rebuked. In 'Johnnie' it was laughed at as boyish froth. One open and bitter opponent of Lincoln, Clement Vallandigham, was set down in the South and told never to come North again. He came, and stayed North with impunity. So to the mouthings of 'Southern rights' of the debonair young actor, who was far from being of ranking importance with a Vallandigham, little attention was paid.

Few people realized and, in the terrible loss the Nation had sustained, few cared to be interested in the shame and disgrace which came to Edwin Booth and his family, the heartrending humiliation that had come to the Booth mother. John Wilkes was her beloved Absalom.

John Wilkes Booth

The pall which enveloped the Booth family was extended in a large measure to the profession of which John Wilkes Booth was a member. The eldest brother of the Booths, acting in Cincinnati at the time of Lincoln's death, narrowly escaped mobbing, perhaps death, so abhorred was even the name of Booth. Edwin Booth and his brother-in-law, the celebrated comedian John S. Clarke, were arrested, while so respected a member of Baltimore's community as John T. Ford, the lessee of the theater in which the tragedy occurred, was imprisoned.

Gradually, however, there came a subsidence of hatred and prejudice. As the country calmed down, people realized that the harrowing deed was the act of a fanatic and involved no other member of the perpetrator's family nor of his profession. The sting of disgrace which Edwin Booth and his family suffered was always poignantly felt, however, by this sensitive, melancholy man whose life was one succession of sorrows. The subject of his brother was one, of course, upon which one never touched in his presence, though some one once inadvertently handed him a program of 'Our American Cousin,' the play performed the night of the assassination. Booth blanched and walked away. And he was once the recipient of a request for seats to see him act from Boston Corbett. As he believed, Corbett justified the request by reminding Booth that he had killed his brother. Corbett turned out to be a maniac.

One day in his room at The Players, Booth saw

that the present writer was irresistibly attracted to the picture of John Wilkes. The great Hamlet shook his head sadly while a world of pitiful meaning swam in his eyes. The author felt guilty for having momentarily aroused a slumbering sorrow. From the sad but kindly expression it was felt that something might be ventured on the dread subject. Nothing was. When Booth talked of the matter at all, which was extremely rarely, it was to the poet Aldrich, Dr. Horace Howard Furness, Commodore E. C. Benedict, and, of course, to Joseph Jefferson.

When Lincoln died the writer was but a youngster of eleven, but he was even then a member of the same profession as John Wilkes Booth — the profession of Garrick, Siddons, Forrest, and Charlotte Cushman — and too young to sense much professional disgrace at Booth's deplorable act. As the present writer grew older, he felt the reflection less and less as he came to realize that, except perhaps for plays, his profession had no monopoly of murderers, nor yet of fanatics. It was seen that actors as a class were about as other people in their strengths and weaknesses, and in this particular matter of murderers it would be necessary to indulge themselves to no little extent in order to approach the average of other classes.

As the son of a Civil War veteran, interest had always been keen for the writer in the history of that war. It was but a sad step from Lincoln to John Wilkes Booth, and the author set himself the task of searching out a reason for Booth's conduct which was

so far afield from the man's innate qualities, his childhood environment, and the artistic refinements of his family. It was wondered whether Booth did not have other motives, which has been so strenuously denied, than those of a vulgar, ruffian-like instinct and desire to kill. It is confidently believed that he had.

CHAPTER II

BOOTH'S YOUTH

JOHN WILKES BOOTH was a laughing, joyous, mischievous boy, full of health and activity which led him into all sorts of harmless pranks as the means of expending a world of surplus energy. They were a distinguished, good-looking race of people, these Booths, and it was no wonder the mother was proud of her offspring and that she and her husband, the famous tragedian who acted in French with almost the same facility as in English, made their child, John Wilkes, the signal object of their affection. In him seems to have been centered a special radiance of beauty and grace. What a blessing the veil of the future is never drawn!

'He was of a gentle, loving disposition, very boyish and full of fun,' says his brother Edwin. 'His mother's darling,' he adds; and this we may well believe, for in all that he did, even in the wildest tricks, there was something markedly winning and attractive. He would take sleigh-rides in July, to the detriment of the sleigh's runners, but to the amusement of those about the 'Farm' and in the country where he and most of his brothers and sisters were born, Belair, Maryland,[1] twenty-two miles from Baltimore. He would charge through the woods on horseback, shouting heroic

[1] The elder Booth named his home 'Tudor Hall.'

speeches and brandishing a lance that had been given to his father by a soldier who had fought with Zachary Taylor. In short, he was as most boys are at his age; in and out of a thousand thoughtless tricks and deviltries which, at the time of their occurrence, would try the patience of a saint, but which thereafter speedily became material for laughing narration to family and friends. When he was especially trying, it was no doubt predicted that he would end on the gallows, just as it has been, and ever will be, predicted of many mischievous boys whose future has been, and will be, peaceful and distinguished.

It was easy to forgive this magnetic Booth boy the little aches and pains, the pecks of minor troubles he caused, for he was not only joyous and tender, but, when it was 'all over,' he was so winningly contrite. No doubt, too, the ease with which he was forgiven and folded to his mother's breast made further infraction of her peace and comfort less difficult, for he adored her and she adored him. His last earthly thought was of her, his last earthly message to her: 'Tell my mother,' he said to the soldier who had to listen intently to catch the words, 'I died for my country and that I did what I thought was for the best.' Died for his country! That is what he thought; that is what he believed, fanatically. Poor, gifted, misguided, misunderstanding John Wilkes Booth!

What a thousand pities it was that this high-strung, inordinately impressionable young man could not, like his brothers Junius and Edwin, have had a differ-

THE BOOTH BROTHERS IN JULIUS CÆSAR

Left to right: John Wilkes Booth as Mark Antony, Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., as Cassius, Edwin Booth as Brutus

From a water-color in the Harvard College Library

ent environment at the touchstone time of his career. They had passed that period in the North where the sentiment was strong, as Sumner expressed it, that 'Freedom, and not slavery, is national; while slavery, and not freedom, is sectional,' and that the time had come for slavery's abolition. He passed those years in the South, where he became so inoculated with the views of its people that we find him later — in 1864 — declaring in a letter to his brother-in-law, the distinguished comedian John S. Clarke: 'This country was formed for the white, and not for the black man. And looking upon African slavery from the same standpoint held by the framers of our Constitution, I, for one, have considered it the greatest blessing (both for themselves and for us) that God ever bestowed on a favored nation.' These were the sentiments, no doubt many of the exact words, he had heard expressed innumerable times by eloquent Southern orators and essayists. They had impressed him deeply. This letter, from which the above is but an excerpt, will be given later. It has a signal value in showing conclusively that Booth's plot against Lincoln had, at first, no thought in it of assassination.

All the conspirators to this plot were trained for one thing and for that alone — abduction. Booth's talk, his actions, his letters were of nothing else. Indeed, anything other than abduction, as we shall see, could have no value to Booth nor to the cause of which he was so enthusiastically enamored.

But we are anticipating somewhat. In the mean

while, the good looks of the child grew with the youth and the young man, and so, too, did his tenderness and affection. He was thoughtful, tactful, and forgiving. When he had become known professionally and when, because of his many personal attractions, flirtatious women deluged him with compromising missives, always his first act was to tear out and destroy the signatures. Clara Morris, a beginner in the theater in which he was starring, remembers with respect that this Adonis, who, however, she did not believe 'led the godly, sober, and righteous life enjoined upon us all,' was thus careful to protect the names of foolish women who indulged in 'a burst of amatory flattery addressed to an unknown actor who will despise her for her trouble.' One morning when Booth caught her watching him mutilating the unread letters and piling them up in a heap, he said to her, 'They are harmless now, little one; their sting lies in the tail.'

Her description of John Wilkes Booth is well worth passing on: 'He was, like his great elder brother, rather lacking in height, but his head and throat, and the manner of its rising from his shoulders, were very beautiful. His coloring was unusual: the ivory pallor of his skin, the inky blackness of his densely thick hair, the heavy lids of his glowing eyes were all Oriental and they gave a touch of mystery to his face when it fell into gravity; but there was generally a flash of white teeth behind his silky mustache and a laugh in his eyes.' Miss Morris adds that there was no doubt her

sex 'was mad about him.' And there is no doubt that Booth made industrious, romantic response to that sex.

Gashed on the head and through the eyebrow by a nervous fellow actor in a stage combat, he would hear of no apology. Suffering as he must have been, he extended his hand and rejoiced that his eye had not been destroyed.

Dashing out of the stage door to the telegraph office one day, he precipitately capsized a child, 'a roamer of the streets.' Lifting the youngster swiftly to his feet Booth drew his handkerchief from his pocket, wiped the child's dirty face, kissed him, filled his hands with coins, and then rushed on his way to dispatch his message. Says Miss Morris, who witnessed the scene and who tells the story charmingly: 'He knew of no witness to the act. To kiss a pretty, clean child under the approving eyes of mama might mean nothing but politeness, but surely it required the prompting of a warm and tender heart to make a young and thoughtless man feel for and caress such a dirty, forlorn bit of babyhood as that.' [1]

'Pictures of John Wilkes Booth,' says W. J. Ferguson,[2] 'in the main, disclose him as saturnine. They show little of his quick excitability and nothing of his love of fun, no trace of his joyousness. For these qualities, in common with all the members of our company, I held him in admiration and high esteem.

[1] Clara Morris: *Life on the Stage.*

[2] *Saturday Evening Post*, February 12, 1927.

With me the extent of my regard and respect for Booth fell nothing short of hero worship. Practical jokes of his invention appealed to me as the quintessence of humor. . . . If he was insane or bordering on insanity, he gave me no such idea. . . . His verve and fire as an actor made him stand high in the scale of my ideals.'

William Winter,[1] the dramatic critic, tells us that Booth's acting was boisterous and declamatory, 'but he was talented and if he had lived longer and studied his art he might have attained to a high position. . . . He gained some measure of public admiration, and with members of the dramatic profession he was a favorite. The late Mrs. G. H. Gilbert, who acted with him, entertained a high opinion of him. McCullough liked him. So did John S. Clarke. So did the late Edwin Varrey, a fine actor and one of the best of men. . . . Everybody was horrified at his terrible crime. . . . The stage associates of John Wilkes Booth at first utterly disbelieved and scoffed at the statement that he had shot the President . . . declaring it incredible that such a man could do such a deed.'

One prominent actor of the day, however, was not surprised at Booth's deed — Edwin Forrest. Forrest knew the elder Booth and greatly admired his art, but was critical of his 'eccentricities.'

When John McCullough, who supported Forrest in his plays, rushed into Forrest's room at his hotel and told him that Lincoln had been assassinated and that

[1] *Vagrant Memories*, 169.

FANNY BROWN
('Pretty Fay Brown')
One of the photographs found in Booth's pocket

John Wilkes Booth was suspected of having committed the deed, adding that he did not believe it, Forrest replied:

'Well, I do!'

'You do! Why?'

'Oh,' said Forrest who loved an oath, and whose star had been somewhat dimmed by the rise of young Edwin Booth, 'all those ——d d——d Booths are crazy!'

At another time, on Forrest's chief support, probably John McCullough, becoming too hoarse to play, the manager, John T. Ford, urged Forrest to engage the handsome John Wilkes Booth as a substitute. Forrest had seen Booth in Philadelphia and had not been impressed. Forrest scornfully rejected Ford's suggestion, refusing to play with 'any such damned spad!'

Lincoln admired Forrest's acting, and saw him play whenever he came to Washington. Forrest was one of many thousand pacifists who wanted the war ended and who snarled at Lincoln's obstinacy in trying to save the Union. To air his opposition, Forrest altered the text in 'Richelieu,' and had the audacity to propel the speech directly at the President, sitting in the stage box:

'Take away the sword; states *must* be saved without it.'

The correct reading is: 'states *may* be saved without it.' [1]

[1] W. J. Ferguson: *Saturday Evening Post*, 'Lincoln's Death.'

Clara Morris, who acted with Booth, said that no man had ever a greater affection from his comrades. 'At the theater, as the sunflowers turn upon their stalks to follow the beloved sun, so old and young our faces smilingly turned to him.'

'Full of impulses just now like a colt, his heels in the air nearly as often as his head,' said a manager, 'but wait a year or two till he gets used to harness and quiets down a bit, and then you will see as great an actor as America can produce.'

Sir Charles Wyndham, who, during his day, was one of the most distinguished and interesting figures in the Anglo-American dramatic world, was closely associated at one time with Booth. For two months they were together as fellow actors in the same stock company at Grover's Theater, Washington, D.C. With a European diploma as surgeon in his pocket and abolition sympathies in his heart, Wyndham came to America at the outbreak of the Civil War and gave his services to the Federal Government. Renowned as an amateur player, he accepted, *ad interim*, an engagement in the (Leonard) Grover Company. In 1863, Booth was at the head of the Grover Stock Company and with it at this time Wyndham made his first professional appearance. He had originally been intended for the ministry. 'Wyndham's relations with Booth were such as to bring some understanding of his characteristics. He was qualified to speak of a man who must always have a dark but vital interest in history.'

Booth's Youth

Speaking of this association with John Wilkes Booth to a New York *Herald* representative, June 27, 1909, Wyndham said:

A marvelous man. He was one of the few to whom that ill-used term of genius might be applied with perfect truth. He was a genius and a most unfortunate one. His dramatic powers were of the best. They were untutored, untrained. He lacked the quality of the student that Edwin possessed, but the artist was there.

Seldom has the stage seen a more impressive, or a more handsome, or a more impassioned actor. Picture to yourself Adonis, with high forehead, ascetic face corrected by rather full lips, sweeping black hair, a figure of perfect youthful proportions and the most wonderful black eyes in the world. Such was John Wilkes Booth.

At all times his eyes were his striking features but when his emotions were aroused they were like living jewels. Flames shot from them. His one physical defect was his height (for certain heroic characters), . . . but he made up for the lack by his extraordinary presence and magnetism. . . .

I was strongly attracted to him in the first place by his effective, thrilling presentation of Hamlet. Edwin's was a reflective Hamlet. As John Wilkes Booth played it, the Danish Prince was unmistakably mad throughout. Edwin's conception of the part was that of uneven and unbalanced genius, and wonderfully he portrayed it. But John Wilkes leaned toward the other view of the character, as was in keeping with his own bent of mind. His Hamlet was insane, and his interpretation was fiery, convincing, and artistic.

The courtesy and kindness shown me by John Wilkes made way for friendship between us, and we were frequently together after the play. He was a most charming

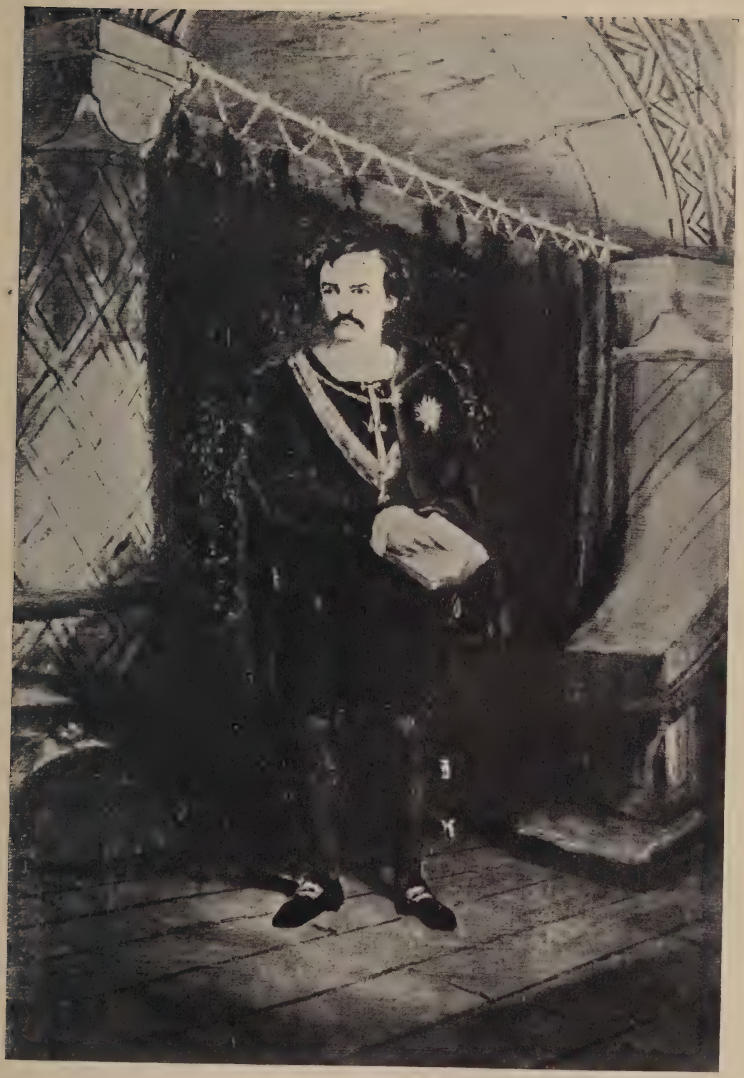
fellow off the stage as well as on, a man of flashing wit and magnetic manner. He was one of the best *raconteurs* to whom I ever listened. As he talked he threw himself into his words, brilliant, ready, enthusiastic. He could hold a group spellbound by the hour at the force and fire and beauty of him. He was unusually fluent. And yet throughout the spell he wove upon his listeners there were startling breaks, abrupt contrasts, when his eccentricity and peculiarity cropped to the surface.

He was the idol of women. They would rave of him, his voice, his hair, his eyes. Small wonder, for he was fascinating.

Small wonder, too, that after his death the photographs of five beautiful women were found in the pocket of his diary. Except for the fact that Booth was most discreet in his relations with the gentler sex, the greater wonder is that many more such photographs were not discovered. And then, too, it was such a small pocket.

Booth was as generous with his money in assisting his friends and acquaintances as he was with his professional services. The last time he appeared on the stage, in character, was for the benefit of his warm friend, the tragedian, John McCullough. He assumed the rôle of Pescara in 'The Apostate,' a play written for his father by Sheil. He had a delicate sense of truth and a strong feeling of modesty. Some actors were praising his Hamlet. 'No, no, no!' he replied. 'There is but one Hamlet to my mind; that's my brother Edwin. You see, between ourselves, he *is* Hamlet, melancholy and all!' [1]

[1] Clara Morris: *Life on the Stage.*



JOHN WILKES BOOTH AS HAMLET
From a painting

Booth's Youth

When Adam Badeau came back wounded from the war, he was carried to the bed of Edwin Booth, who was his great friend. General Badeau tells us [1] that Edwin Booth and his brother John Wilkes Booth 'dressed my wounds and tended me with the greatest care.' He says of the latter: 'He was exceedingly handsome, even physically finer than Edwin, but less intellectual in his manliness. I never saw him on the stage, but under Edwin's roof I thought him very captivating, though not so distinguished as his greater brother.'

Many critics and men of judgment agreed that John Wilkes Booth was a young tragedian of rich promise. John Ellsler was an old-time manager and actor of the period and intimate all his life with the Booths. While he greatly admired Edwin Booth's intellectual power and his artistic care, Ellsler declared that 'John has more of the old man's power in one performance than Edwin can show in a year. He has the fire, the dash, the touch of strangeness.' Ellsler was an adherent of the 'old school' of energetic acting and 'John' was young and fiery — and gifted.

In a letter written to his brother Junius in 1858 which has recently come into the present writer's possession, Edwin Booth says of John Wilkes, who was then but twenty years old, 'I don't think he will startle the world . . . but he is improving fast and looks beautiful on the *platform*.' In a manner of which

[1] *McClure's Magazine*, August, 1893.

he had not the slightest suspicion, no man was destined more to 'startle the world.'

Writing to her son Junius, the Booth mother, under date of 1858, says: 'John is doing well at Richmond. He is very anxious to get on faster. When he has a run of bad parts he writes home in despair.' In another letter in the same year she speaks of Edwin going to Richmond to play Iago to the Othello of John for the latter's benefit.[1]

[1] Here, from the old and faded scrapbook of Mrs. James Seymour, actress, and mother of the then boy-prodigy William Seymour, is a criticism clipped from the New Orleans *Daily True Delta*, 1864, on the acting of Booth, who, after something of a struggle, had broken through into public recognition:

ST. CHARLES THEATER
DEBUT OF J. WILKES BOOTH

On the American stage the name of Booth is truly a tower of strength, an evidence of which was last night presented by the brilliant assemblage of 'fair women and brave men' that graced the Old Drury to welcome the youngest scion of that gifted family to those boards which had been the scene of the many and oft-repeated triumphs of his distinguished father and scarcely less distinguished brother. The fame of Mr. Booth, as a young tragedian of extraordinary promise, had preceded him, and if his powerful delineation of the 'bloody-minded Gloster' is to be taken as a sample of his ability, then we cheerfully add our mite of admiration to the general praise and commendation his efforts have met with wherever he has appeared.

In *physique*, Mr. Booth is greatly the superior of his brother Edwin, being a much handsomer and larger man, and in no other particular that we could discern last night is he at all inferior to that eminent and much-admired actor. Of his reading it would be unfair to judge from a first representation, but his Hamlet this evening will fully test his metal in that particular.

His scenes with Lady Anne, with the queen mother and princes in the council chamber, and with the lord mayor and aldermen, were all masterpieces of satanic dissimulation, and scarcely inferior to his lamented father. In the tent scene and on the ensanguined field of Bosworth, he was absolutely horrifying, and while looking at him we could well conceive of the truth of the story that is told of Lord Byron, who, as the chronicler tells us, was so overcome by Kean's acting of Sir Giles Overreach as to faint away in his box.

Mr. Chaplin appeared to much advantage as Richmond, etc., etc. After Mr.

It was this 'strangeness' in his acting observed by Ellsler, the swiftness to 'despair' of which the mother writes, and especially the convivial temptations such a handsome young dog would encounter that wrought such havoc in the mind and soul of John Wilkes Booth. We scarcely know what Wilkes Booth would have been in maturity: he had but reached the formative period. But all evidence and indication point to the likelihood of a richly artistic development, provided that 'strangeness' which was a part of his paternal inheritance did not overcome him.

Whatever else John Wilkes Booth was, brutality and vulgarity had no part in his nature. He was a man of refinement and ideals: a man to whom 'the rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose,' meant much. In his plan to abduct the President, even in the terrible deed he committed, he was actuated by no thought of monetary gain, but, as we shall see, by a self-sacrificing, albeit wholly fanatical devotion to a cause he thought supreme. Despite much absurd statement to the contrary, revenge or punishment played no part in his plotting against Lincoln.

Booth's Richard the best performance in the piece was little Willie Seymour's Duke of York, which was frequently and loudly applauded, as it deserved. He is really a wonderful little fellow and speaks his lines with a boldness and correctness that some old enough to be his father would do well to endeavor to imitate. Mr. Booth will appear to-night as Hamlet.

CHAPTER III

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

JOHN WILKES BOOTH was born and reared in an atmosphere of refinement, an atmosphere in which every sentence or two suggested an apt quotation. He was the beloved son of a man who was a classical scholar, an extraordinary linguist, and sufficiently eminent as a tragedian to be the outstanding rival of the great Edmund Kean, to hear whom, the poet Coleridge said, 'was like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning.' Unless we know the intimate history of the matter, it seems inconceivable that a descendant of such a family as that of Junius Brutus Booth, renowned so long in the arts of peace and culture, could, by the farthest reaches of imagination, become the assassin of one of the gentlest, most magnanimous souls earth has given us.

Booth's grandfather, Richard Booth, was 'an eccentric character' his granddaughter tells us. He was an English barrister 'with a vaunted love of Republicanism. A scholar of reputation who kept a picture of General Washington in his drawing-room, a picture before which he insisted all who entered should bow with reverence.' [1]

These eccentricities, greatly exaggerated, of the father, Richard Booth, descended to the son, Junius

[1] Asia Booth Clarke: *The Booths*, 4.

Brutus Booth, the tragedian, called 'the elder Booth.' From the same source we learn that even 'in the records of his youth, when the elder Booth's profession held every incentive to ambition, energy and indefatigable labor — when his habits were most temperate and abstemious — we occasionally find these slight aberrations of mind which mark that exquisite turning-point between genius and madness.'

Volunteering to appear for a benefit in New York, he failed to be on hand. Search found him at a fire in William Street, 'laboring at an engine,' in the endeavor, as he said, 'to save the people's property from destruction.'

Conway, the actor, was drowned in the Mississippi. Passing the spot on a steamer, Booth exclaimed, 'I have a message for Conway!' and threw himself into the water. He was rescued with difficulty.

Interrupted during a performance by a man in the gallery, Booth fixed him with a glance and said, 'Beware, I am the headsman! I am the executioner!' The audience also became fixed — in admiration and respect — and listened to the end with a silence that greatly added to 'the solemnity of the scene.'

At Philadelphia, billed to appear as Shylock, he could not be found when the time neared for his first scene. It was known that he had come to the theater and had gone to his dressing-room. As an understudy was about to go on, the much-sought-for Booth emerged, fully costumed, from a dark scene-closet where he had hidden himself.

Under the influence of too much stimulant it was said that he once went through the principal streets of Philadelphia on horseback, clinging to the horse's tail, with his legs locked about the animal's neck. Locked up in a room to keep him sober for the evening's performance, he was found greatly intoxicated. He had bribed the darkey bell-boy to bring him mint juleps, sucking them in by means of a long straw through the keyhole.

It was a sad life the boy Edwin Booth led, says Asia Booth Clarke, the daughter, 'watching the health and caring for the safety of his eccentric though kind-hearted sire. It was a duty requiring the patience and endurance of a woman, but Mrs. Booth, no longer young and strong, was compelled to place the charge in her son's hands while he, an excitable, nervously organized youth, was often unequal to bear half that was required of him. Sleepless nights and lonely days are not the proper lot of boyhood, yet many such painful experiences were woven into the daily life of Edwin Booth.' 'He was the monitor and guardian,' says William Winter, 'of that wild genius.'

It was a harmless 'wildness' which had in it often much of humor and laughter. One night in Louisville, after giving a superb performance of 'Richard III,' Booth started for home. A sudden impulse took him to walk the streets alone, but the boy Edwin would not leave him. Booth 'darted off in a contrary direction and walked rapidly until he came to a covered market which he entered and began pacing up and

down.' He walked till daylight, the boy Edwin dogging his footsteps, alternately angry and amused at the absurdity of the situation. 'Not a syllable had been spoken by either, when the elder pedestrian, from exhaustion, was at last impelled to go home to his bed.'

These 'slight aberrations which mark that exquisite turning-point between genius and madness' were too often set in motion by too frequent indulgence in alcoholic stimulus and its harmful effect upon the sensitive temperament of the elder Booth. Still, the tendency to mental eccentricity was unquestionably present and, the writer thinks, was transmitted with fatal emphasis to the youngest son, John Wilkes Booth.

In espousing the cause of the South, a cause that was close to his heart, John Wilkes Booth conceived a bold and daring plot to bring about the success of the Southern Confederacy. Murder formed no part of that plot. The world was so overweighted by the declaration of the Federal Government that Lincoln's assassination was the result of a successful conspiracy on the part of the leaders of the South, and that Wilkes Booth was but its pliant tool, that not too many people have bothered or cared to know aught to the contrary. Especially since the assassin paid the penalty of his mad act. The Government's theory went up in smoke, its accusations were proved to be without the slightest warrant, when its witnesses were shown to be perjured and their chief, one Sanford Conover, confessing, was sent to the penitentiary.

Around this sad historical event, as around other *causes célèbres*, much myth has gathered. It is now often stated, but without any foundation in fact, that Booth was never captured and shot; that he escaped and died by poison self-administered, many years after his supposed capture. How this myth arose it is not difficult to explain. Of this and of Booth's extraordinary plot to capture the President of the United States from under the noses of the army and navy, of which he was the Commander-in-Chief, deposit him a prisoner in the enemy's capital, and how out of the failure of this plan grew the plot of assassination, it is the purpose of these pages to show.

CHAPTER IV

BOOTH'S PLAN TO ABDUCT LINCOLN

JOHN WILKES BOOTH, or 'Johnnie' as he was known to his familiars, on learning that there was to be a performance of 'Still Waters Run Deep' at the Soldiers' Home near Washington, became greatly excited. Lester Wallack and E. L. Davenport were to appear in the play and so, too, was John Matthews, a well-known stock actor and close friend of 'Johnnie's.' What excited Booth, however, was not that Wallack and Davenport were to play and that his friend Matthews was to be in the cast, but that Abraham Lincoln, a lover of the theater, was to attend the performance.[1] This afforded an opportunity which John Wilkes Booth and a number of his especially interested friends had been seeking, an opportunity to abduct the President.

Once before, during the engagement, January, 1864, of Edwin Forrest at Ford's Theater in Washington, there had been a gathering of these conspirators, headed by John Wilkes Booth, to carry off the President. Not all the worthies were present. Arnold and O'Laughlin, two former schoolmates of Booth, both of whom had served in the Confederate army, and an

[1] 'I am engaged to go to the theater with Mrs. Lincoln. It is the kind of an engagement I never break.' Lincoln in a note to Senator Stewart. (*Reminiscences of Senator William M. Stewart.*)

actor named Chester whom Booth importuned, even threatened, but in vain, failed to put in an appearance. There was one other rather important absentee — the President. The night was unusually stormy, and he, with some members of the Cabinet who generally accompanied him, had stayed away.

On Thursday afternoon, then, March 16, 1865, the day of the performance of 'Still Waters Run Deep' at the Soldiers' Home, half a dozen or seven young men, John Wilkes Booth, John H. Surratt, Lewis Payne (Powell), Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlin, George A. Atzerodt, and David E. Herold, all ardent Confederate sympathizers, armed to the teeth and mounted on horseback, rode out in the direction of the Soldiers' Home with the fell purpose of capturing the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. This was, indeed, a tremendous undertaking. These daringly patriotic Southerners confidently believed, if the abduction proved successful, fame and fortune awaited them. A grateful people, fighting to sustain the rights given to them by their country's Constitution, as they asserted, would rise up and entwine the brows of the abductors with laurel, sing pæans of praise in their honor, and fill their laps with gold. The haughty North, meanwhile, humbled to the dust with chagrin, would weep in despair. The consideration of 'gold' did not influence or affect Booth. By the practice of his profession he could get all of that he required. It was Booth's money, and his alone, earned in his professional work, which was defraying the ex-

penses of his followers. Surratt excepted, perhaps, money was the only reason for the adherence of Booth's accomplices, and he did not fail to dangle the bait before their avid eyes. He knew that whatever appeal should be made to their patriotism would be but a secondary consideration.

But there happened to this second attempt to carry off the President precisely what happened to the previous attempt — the intended victim failed to put in an appearance. Busy with his executive duties he sent one of his Cabinet officials to represent him. Our bravos were not interested in representatives; they scorned this one. What they were after was the Chief of the Nation, no less. When they saw not Lincoln but a stranger in the White House carriage, they were dismayed. They scampered away, pursued only by their consciences. Believing the carriage occupant to be but a decoy, they were confident their plans had been discovered. They thought immediate arrest would follow and were apprehensive. To tell the truth they were a comic lot, this band of conspirators, a sort of Falstaffian army, with but one mind among them and that warped by fanaticism. It took all of Booth's ardor and enthusiasm to give them reassurance and to hold them together. Like a lot of schoolboys overtaken in an attempt to rob an orchard, they raced home, and were really angry that they had bagged no Presidential fruit.

Nothing happened to them except temporary discouragement. There was a leisurely scattering of their

forces for reasons of discretion to await the call of the leader, John Wilkes Booth. Nobody, particularly the Government, seemed to have known anything about this conspiracy during its activity, except a disloyal creature by the name of Louis J. Weichman, who boarded in the home of one of the conspirators, John H. Surratt. Weichman and Surratt had been college mates. Booth did not quite trust Weichman, though Surratt vouched for him. Piqued that he was not admitted as fully to the confidence of the conspirators as he felt he should be, Weichman hinted to a fellow clerk, Captain Gleason, in the Government employ, something of the action and talk of the plotters at Mrs. Surratt's. He even suggested that it might be a plan to carry off the President, at which Captain Gleason hooted. The idea, to him, of Lincoln being abducted in a city so well guarded as Washington seemed absurd. If Weichman knew anything at all, he knew positively that it was a plan to kidnap the President. However, the plan of the conspirators, as reported to Gleason by Weichman, having come to nothing, it was decided to say nothing to the Secretary of War about the matter, but to watch for further developments. This decision on the part of Captain Gleason was about as reckless an assumption of responsibility, not to say as brilliant a bit of stupidity, as could be imagined. A report to Stanton might well have saved Lincoln's life.

America has never been a warlike nation, and at the beginning of the Civil War she was comparatively un-

skillful in all things pertaining to the art of arms. What knowledge she had of it seemed locked in the breasts of Southerners like Lee, Johnston, Jackson, and so on. Lincoln had but one great purpose in view — the preservation of the Union. This could only be accomplished by overcoming enemies from without. Dangerously enough, there was comparatively scant attention paid to enemies within, and the Capital was teeming with a mass of unsympathetic, disaffected, and disloyal people.

Except for seizing the Chief Magistrate in a theater and carrying him off, the plot to abduct the President was anything but mad or impossible. Considering the circumstances as they then existed, the ease of blockade-running into Richmond, the Confederate Capital, the accomplishment of such a feat presented no superdifficulties. Lincoln had a woeful disregard for his own personal safety. 'I cannot possibly guard myself against all dangers,' he said, 'unless I shut myself up in an iron box, in which condition I could scarcely perform the duties of a President.' As was proved, Lincoln was capable of taking care of the Nation: the Nation, however, was culpably weak in taking care of him. Lincoln was a fatalist and felt it useless to guard against something that must happen. This helped him readily to disregard things in connection with his personal safety. He would go about from the White House to the War Office at night, or to the Soldiers' Home, close to Washington, with but a single guard, and quite often unaccompanied.

In case of an attack, overwhelmed by numbers and without protection, resistance would have been useless. Yet it is not impossible that a courageous and powerful man like Lincoln, who in his young manhood was not averse to humbling champion wrestlers, would have fought back. In that event, that part of the motley band of abductors who did not get scared and run away might have done him some bodily harm. But considering the value of the President as a live rather than as a dead hostage — which the leader, Booth, fully realized — no doubt great precaution would be taken to do him no harm. Dead, the President was useless for barter. Alive, the chief conspirator reasoned, it would surely mean the release by exchange of the Confederate prisoners and possibly the recognition of the Confederacy itself, and, per consequence, the end of the war, not to mention great glory for John Wilkes Booth.

But Booth feared no resistance from Lincoln and anticipated no harm to him. As the embodiment of abolition opposition to the South, Booth held Lincoln in somewhat frothy contempt. Was the President not ridiculed by his Cabinet? Was he not regarded in a toplofty, condescending manner by the fashionables whose 'culchah' reached back almost to their grandmothers? Was he not the man whom his own law partner, Herndon, declared 'so unused to clothes' that he 'seldom got them all on'? He seems to have had but scant knowledge of the President's personal qualities. What had Wilkes Booth, one of the most

athletic young men in the country, noted, according to the testimony of the theatrical manager, John T. Ford, for his swordsmanship and his extraordinary leaps upon the stage, to fear from the uncouth rail-splitter from the West. 'I saw Booth,' says Ford,[1] 'on one occasion make one of these extraordinary leaps, and the Baltimore *Sun* condemned it in an editorial the next day — styling him "the gymnastic actor." It was in the play of "Macbeth," the entrance to the Witch Scene.' To the fire-eating young man who had so enthusiastically espoused the Confederate cause and who possessed the athletic prowess of a Douglas Fairbanks, the President's character was summed up in his secret flight through Baltimore, in disguise some said, to the Capital, his solicitous care to keep that Capital well guarded, and in his summons to the negroes of the South to strike for freedom.

Booth was not alone in his estimate of the weakness of the President's character. On many sides the quality and ability of Lincoln were in great doubt. Edwin M. Stanton, afterwards Secretary of War, in his private correspondence [2] (1861) stressed 'the painful imbecility of Lincoln.' Salmon P. Chase's supercilious attitude toward Lincoln is well known. William H. Seward's 'Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration,' in which he practically invited Lincoln to

[1] *Trial of the Conspirators.*

[2] This correspondence was not given out until after the war. Mr. Stanton at the time, however, made no secret of his hostility. According to at least two chroniclers he spoke of the President as 'a low, cunning clown.' (Alonzo Rothschild: *Lincoln, Master of Men*, 225.)

turn over to him, Seward, the duties and management of the presidential office, is a matter of history. McClellan's insulting treatment of the President is still cause for open-mouthed wonderment. The crowning insult came one evening when Lincoln, ever eager to push the slow-moving McClellan into action, called upon the General and was told by the orderly that McClellan had gone out. Lincoln decided to await his return. When McClellan came in, he was told that the President was calling and awaited him in the reception room. Taking no heed, the General went on upstairs. After considerable wait, Lincoln again approached the orderly and, learning that McClellan had returned, directed the soldier to inform the General of the presence of the President. In a few moments the orderly returned with the message that General McClellan had gone to bed. When others, indignant at this treatment, remonstrated, Lincoln replied, 'If he will only win battles, I'll hold his horse.'

Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation September 23, 1862, after the battle of Antietam. Of that Proclamation the fire-eating Southern Judge Campbell said: 'Our enemy is seeking an ally among those of our own household and to add a service in insurrection to the horror of civil war.' The Richmond *Enquirer*, which came daily under Lincoln's observation, launched the following: 'Butler [General Benjamin F.] by common consent is called the Beast, but bad as he is, he is a Saint by comparison with his

Master. What shall we call him? Coward, assassin, savage, murderer of women and babies? Or shall we consider them all as embodied in the word fiend, and call him Lincoln, the Fiend!'

Quoting the newspapers of the time, McMaster[1] tells us that there were so many daily journals in the North opposed to the war, preferring disunion to a fratricidal strife, that the populace became indignant and forced them to hang out the national emblem as evidence of loyalty. The flag had often to be borrowed for the purpose.

In the North, at the beginning of the war, the appeals of the President and the State governors for men to defend the country went almost unheeded. Men were willing to come forward to protect their State from invasion, but they would not enlist in great numbers as a part of the army of the United States, to be sent wherever ordered.

Naturally enough, these Northern opponents of the war were hailed as Southern sympathizers. Booth, along with the South, fattened on this evidence of sympathy for secession. Even Lowell, who called Lincoln 'our first American,' wavered for a time, and in a letter to Horace Scudder said, 'I guess an ounce of Frémont is better than a pound of long Abraham.' Because Lincoln had in him 'the smack and tang of elemental things,' it was difficult for many people to realize that

[1] John Bach McMaster: *History of the People of the United States during Lincoln's Administration.*

'Here was a man to hold against the world,
A man to match the mountains and the sea.'

Much of all this reached Booth's ears. It was in the air, and served but to arouse his contempt for the Chief Magistrate of the Union, who seemed to inspire but little respect and whose person was not felt worthy to be properly protected.

Such, too, was the feeling of many people of the North against the war dragging on interminably, a feeling of openly expressed condemnation, that Booth felt justified in believing that in abducting the President he would not only be serving the South but also the North, which would rejoice with the South at the ending of hostilities.[1] Indeed, it is not at all unlikely that the successful capture of Lincoln might have so disheartened loyal Northern adherents already dismayed at Southern victories and so encouraged Northern malcontents, at the head of whom was Horace Greeley, thundering for peace with all the power of the most influential journal in America, that peace would speedily have followed, with the acknowledgment of the independence of the South. As the individual chiefly responsible for peace, Booth would, indeed, be in an enviable position.

All this had a powerful effect upon the mind of Booth, who saw an opportunity to serve the country as a whole; in short, to be the deliverer of his country

[1] As a protest against draft enlistment, there was a mob riot in New York City in 1863 in which a thousand people were killed and nearly $2,000,000 worth of property destroyed.

from a devastating war. This was anything but an ignoble ambition. The indifference, the contempt of Lincoln as to personal protection, the disregard in which was held proper protection of the Chief Magistrate, and the astounding neglect of the Government to enforce that protection on him served, of course, as further incentive to Booth in his plans of abduction. It was the consciousness of this longing for peace on the part of the North that gave Booth the wild idea, even after the assassination, that he might give himself up and justify himself, as he declared, in the eyes of the world.

It will not do, then, to dismiss John Wilkes Booth as a vulgar cut-throat. True, 'in an access of madness,' he robbed the North of the most precious life it contained, but that was not the act of John Wilkes Booth. It was the act of a madman, driven insane by the sudden collapse of his patriotic ambition, the maddening fear of the total failure of cherished plans to save his country — and by the sudden exaggeration of hereditary imbalance.

Very little, indeed, was lacking for the success of Booth's extraordinary plan to abduct the President, and, strange as it may now sound, for his name to be benevolently remembered as one who had conceived and performed the daring deed of abducting the Chief Magistrate of a country in the interest of peace and the cessation of bloodshed.

John Wilkes Booth was not merely a vain actor kidnaping a President or committing a conspicuous

murder in order that his name might shine, if only in infamy. His name had already begun to shine in the world of art. He was a man who had what he thought was a feasible plan to benefit mankind by stopping a war. He had all the zealot's intensity and conviction of feeling that through his plan he would be able to save the lives and treasure of his nation. His was a saner plan, with infinitely greater chance of success, than the plan of that other zealot, John Brown. Brown's plan involved wholesale slaughter; Booth's wholesale conservation.

For the futile murder John Wilkes Booth committed there is no possible justification, except to a disordered mind. The act is only to be explained in Booth's case by a sudden mental derangement induced by the swift collapse of the Confederacy after the fall of Richmond and the surrender of General Lee and his army, and by the despairing thought that the cause Booth loved was, as he said, 'almost lost' and that 'something decisive and great must be done.' Deep must have been the bitterness of his heart when, too late, he was convinced that his cause would have been saved could he have carried out his scheme of abducting the President.

In moments of sane realization after the deed, he was astounded to find that he was seemingly alone in his belief in the necessity for his murderous act, astounded that no word of commendation was being uttered in his behalf by people, North and South, who had cried aloud against Lincoln. It was then that

bitter disillusion came to John Wilkes Booth. He became appalled at the enormity of his crime. In his diary at this time he wrote: 'I am sure there is no pardon for me in the heavens, since man condemns me so. . . . I have only heard what has been done, except what I did myself, and it fills me with horror. God try and forgive me and bless my mother.'

CHAPTER V

BOOTH'S AMBITION TO STOP THE WAR

It is not strange that John Wilkes Booth gave his heart to the South and his soul to her cause. He was not only born in the South, but, unlike his illustrious brother, Edwin, and his well-known oldest brother, Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., his professional life, brief as it was, had been mostly spent among Southern people and his greatest stage acclaim came to him from them. He was a popular young actor in a stock company in Richmond, Virginia, when John Brown made his famous raid in that ill-starred effort to free the slaves of the South. The impetuous young Booth at once enlisted and, shouldering a musket, stood guard with other patriotic young Southerners at the scaffold on which the martyr Brown was hanged.[1]

How easy it is to picture the enthusiastic welcome given the handsome young actor on his return to Richmond. He had earned his spurs as one who loved the South and was willing to make sacrifices in her behalf. One can understand the 'thunders of applause' that nightly greeted him from audiences made up largely of slave-holders or from those who were wholly wedded to that injustice. He was in absolute sym-

[1] The North acquiesced in the punishment of Brown and his isolated instance of the invasion of Southern rights. Later, the South and Booth, of course, were outraged that the North should wholesalely violate those same rights.

pathy and harmony with his surroundings. Indeed, it would have been strange had it been otherwise.

As Booth grew older, if coming into one's twenty-second or twenty-third year may be called growing older, and became a star, as it is called, taking up the rôles once assumed by his father and adding those of a romantic nature, such as Romeo in 'Romeo and Juliet' and Raphael in 'The Marble Heart,' which were perfect settings for his youth and beauty, he grew swiftly into public favor. In his diary he gives his income at the outbreak of the Civil War as twenty thousand dollars a year. He was as yet only at the beginning of his popularity and his earning capacity. His oldest brother had made a considerable reputation as an actor in California. There was a saying in the dramatic world that Edwin Booth was supreme in the East and Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., in the West, but that John Wilkes Booth ruled the South.[1] Edwin

[1] BOOTH'S REPERTOIRE

Noting the engagement of John Wilkes Booth at the Boston Museum, the Boston *Transcript*, May 13, 1862, said:

'The repertory of the young player during this engagement has been, May 12, "Richard III"; May 13, "Romeo and Juliet" (with Miss Kate Reignolds as Juliet); May 14, "The Robbers," Booth as Charles de Moor and Kate Reignolds as Amelia; May 15, "Richard III," with William Whalley as Richmond and Miss Reignolds as Queen Elizabeth; May 16, benefit of Booth, "Hamlet," with Emily Mestayer as Queen Gertrude and Miss Reignolds as Ophelia; May 19, "The Apostate," Booth as Pescara; May 20, "The Stranger," Booth in the title rôle and Miss Reignolds as Mrs. Haller; May 21, "The Robbers"; May 22, "The Lady of Lyons," Booth as Claude Melnotte, Miss Reignolds as Pauline; May 23, benefit of the star, "Richard III."'

On the same date the *Transcript* said: 'Last evening Mr. John Wilkes Booth made his first appearance in Boston in the difficult character of

Booth, whose fame as an actor had by now grown tremendously, certainly greatly assisted in this sectional ruling by confining his performances exclusively to the North.

Then came the war, and the South with its appreciative audiences and its income were practically closed to the young Antinous. This was not only a deprivation but a wound to John Wilkes Booth. Of what use is a kingdom if the prince of the realm cannot sit on the throne? The enforced absence served but to emphasize the affection of this young stage prince for his subjects and especially for their cause. He longed to do something to aid his admiring subjects, especially something dramatic and heroic. More than most young men of his age he had a strong penchant for the heroic. True, he might go South and enlist as a soldier to fight for their cause. His brother Edwin, tired of his mouthings on the subject, thought that was about the best thing he could do. He asked John why he did not do it. John replied that he had promised his mother to keep out of the quarrel and that he was sorry he had so pledged himself. Later, when Edwin told him he had voted for the reëlection of Lincoln, John expressed deep regret and declared it as his be-

Richard III. . . . Wilkes Booth reminds us of his father in many respects, though he does not imitate him. There are strong indications of genius in his acting and he is perhaps the most promising young actor on the American stage. To-night he performs Romeo, a part in which his youth, beauty, and impassioned earnestness particularly fit him to excel.'

Booth also played 'The Taming of the Shrew' and 'Macbeth.'

BOSTON MUSEUM

ACTING AND STAGE MANAGER.....Mr E F EDACH

THIRD WEEK OF

J. WILKES BOOTH

Who will appear, for the first time a Season, the role of

RAPHAEL, THE SCULPTOR!

Which has been pronounced, in every city, the most Successful of this Gifted Young Tragedian's Impersonations. Every attention will be paid to the MISE EN SCENE, while the well-drilled and efficient attendance of the Gentlemen of Character cannot be surpassed if searched by the

Best Stock Company in the Country!

Mr WARREN as JOHN DOWNEY in.....SEEING WARREN"

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday Evenings,

FEBRUARY 1, 2 AND 3, 1864,

Also, on WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

The Performance will commence with the Overture.....L'Jour de Paris." Bouleuse.

Leader and Musical Director, JULIUS EICHBERG

After which, will be presented the Romantic Drama, called the

MARBLE HEART

Or—THE SCULPTOR'S DREAM.

ACT FIRST—RAPHAEL'S DREAM.

FRIDIAN, the Sculptor.....Mr JOOTH
Diogenes, the Cynic.....Mr Wm. Wallis
Gaurgon, Cousin to Adonis.....J. Wilkes
Alcibiades, the General.....J A Smith
Strabon, the Slave.....Hanse

Tyre, Slave of Phidias.....Miss J Orton
Adonis.....J. The \ " " "
Phryne.....Tyree " " "
Lais.....Statues, f " " "

ACT 2, 3, 4 AND 5—THE REALITY

RAPHAEL DUCHATELET, a Sculptor.....Mr. BOOTH
M'lle Meree, the Marble Heart.....Miss Venage, as Edna
Kate Reignolds
Marie, a poor Orphan.....Josephine Orton
Baron de Meree, Father of M'lle Meree.....Mr. Wm. Wallis
Manette a Lady of Fashion.....Mrs Worrell
Peleon.....Miss M. Andrews
Julia.....Miss Wilder
Madame De Sartin, Mother of Raphael.....Mrs Rice
Miss Emily Mercier

Mr. Whalley
Vincent Chateaumgrant.....J. A. Smith
Mons. Vaudrive.....W Smith
Mons. Lamotte.....J. Reed
Lord Mowbry, with the Song "Cheek of—"

Mr. BOOTH

W. J. Mc
Lord
Bayley
Thorne

By means of Scenery and Incidents.

ACT FIRST. Artistic Sculptor's Studio—a Statue. The Secret, artistic Gossips and Models. Raphael's Love for Marie. Raphael's Dream—a vision, a Statue to Manhood and its Purpose—The Ideal of virtue and the Question of Station

THE STATUES—LAIS. ASPASIA. PHYRNE!

To express—The power of gold—Curious visitors—Noble Hearts—Love and of the end, true one of the latter, true to the man who loves you."

ACT SECOND. Home of Parisdeau—The poor of Paisdeau—Parisdeau—March, the letter—Mr Lamotte—a Challenge—Village, Inhabitants—Raphael joins in a poor—Introduction—The Duel—Mr. Lamotte—Raphael.

ACT THIRD. Studio of Raphael—The statue and the Model—Raphael's love for Marie. The Lamotte—Mr. Lamotte—Raphael and Marie—Marie, the Sculptor—Statue—Lovers—Raphael and—Rapture—an Interlude—Grand Tableau of Transformation.

ACT FOURTH. Apartments in Marie's house—Costs wonderful—Vanity—Luxurious—a Wonderful Statue—Raphael's Love—Marie's Love—Raphael's Love—Marie's Love—Raphael's Love—Marie's Love

lief that ultimately Lincoln would be made King of America.

In a letter to Nahum Capen, in which Edwin Booth tells of all this, he adds: 'We regarded him, John Wilkes Booth, as a good-hearted, harmless, though a wild-brained boy, and used to laugh at his patriotic froth whenever secession was discussed. That he was insane on that one point no one who knew him well can doubt.' What a world of sorrow might have been saved had it not been taken so much for granted that John Wilkes Booth was 'harmless.' Yet he was about the last person one would think of placing under suspicion, for 'with this fair exterior' there was no evidence of any 'rottenness at the core.' Certainly there was no evidence, either, at this time of any harm to the President as coming from Booth, for, in the event of the triumph of the North, John Wilkes Booth, as he stated to his brother Edwin, was confident Lincoln would ultimately become King of America. If he had had the intention to assassinate Lincoln, there would be no fear of such a king. How immature were his ideas of America to suppose that, in any event, she would ever again revert to kings as rulers.

Going into the war, however, as a common soldier was too plebeian a matter for a man like John Wilkes Booth. If he could ignore the promise to his mother and go into the war at all, it must be in some capacity that would be striking and memorable.

With the disaster to the Union forces at Bull Run,

the carnage at Fredericksburg, and the gigantic struggle at Chancellorsville, Booth, with the whole South, felt encouraged to believe that victory and the establishment of a separate nation for the Confederates were but a question of a brief time. Many in the North had reconciled themselves to such a change. However, Gettysburg came and the consequent halting and retreat of the Southern armies which had sought an overwhelming invasion of the North. That the idol of the South, Robert E. Lee, the commander of their armies, recently so continuously victorious, could suffer reverses in battle never entered the minds of the Confederates. His reverse and retreat at Gettysburg discouraged no one more than John Wilkes Booth. He began to feel that Lee, Jackson, and Jefferson Davis were not sufficient in themselves, that they stood in need of assistance from no one so much as from himself. Poor boy! 'The people who had welcomed him with open arms were being slowly crushed to earth,' says David Miller Dewitt in his 'Assassination of Abraham Lincoln' '. . . some part in this tremendous tragedy he must play. . . . Nothing would appease short of some unexampled deed of daring that would signalize his entrance and his exit for all coming time.' What should it be? What should he do? If he could only get rid of the man who he felt was the cause of all the trouble to the South — Lincoln. How could it be done? Why not abduct him? Was such a thing possible? But whether or not possible what a wonderful idea! Carry off the man who was at once the

President of the United States and the Commander-in-Chief of the Army!

Think of the dramatic possibilities of such a plan. Did ever any man, especially a young, romantic actor, have such a golden opportunity to make himself a real hero, to stop the effusion of blood and bind up the wounds of a nation! The more Booth thought of it the more the idea appealed to him. Could it be accomplished? Of course it could. It was as if Fate were in league with him, for Lincoln, in his refusal to be accompanied on his walks and visits, was making abduction an easy matter. The prospect became so alluring as he dwelt upon it that the daring young devil forgot promises to his mother to 'keep out of it,' forgot family, friends, fortune, caution, danger, risk of life — everything. He flung them with prodigal recklessness to the winds, confident that he could successfully carry through that one act which, as he afterwards said, would 'make his name great.' Poor John Wilkes Booth!

With Lincoln once delivered to Jefferson Davis at Richmond, the Confederate Capital, General Grant's drastic order for the exchange of no more Confederate prisoners would be abrogated and the thousands of Southern soldiers imprisoned in the North would be free again to continue the struggle until the South had gained separation. More, the cry of the Northern Democrats, 'The war is a failure,' would be given irresistible strength. Again, the Northwestern Confederation, whose demand was for peace at any price, would, to the embarrassment of the Administration,

be spurred into increased activity and influence. The result would be peace, and on terms dictated by the South, and he — he, John Wilkes Booth — would be responsible for it! More, he would be a hero, not of the tinsel type, but a *bona-fide* patriot. It was, indeed, as he felt, a God-given opportunity, such as come to but few men, and he meant to accept it, to leave no stone unturned to utilize it.

But if it were to be done at all, it must be done not only quickly but artistically and dramatically. How? Nothing simpler. Trap Lincoln in a theater full of his own friends and worshipers, lie in wait for him as he is returning to the White House, overmaster the driver, have Surratt, or some one familiar with the roads in lower Maryland and Virginia, seize the reins — then ho! for Richmond, Jefferson Davis, the end of the war — and glory!

No wonder John Surratt balked when Booth first unfolded the plan to him. It seemed so theatric and impossible. The wonder is that a wily man like Surratt, the undetected spy who alternated leisurely between Washington, Richmond, and Canada, could ever become convinced that any such plan were feasible. Another conspirator, Arnold, was outspoken against such a procedure, but both he and Surratt lent themselves with warmth to the effort to carry off the President when on one of his many lonely trips to the War Office or to the Soldiers' Home. Surratt's final conversion to the scheme in any form whatever is a tribute to Booth's personal magnetism.

Booth's Ambition to Stop the War

The eminent American comedian, John Sleeper Clarke, had married the brilliantly beautiful Asia Booth, second daughter of the elder Booth. Clarke and his brother-in-law Edwin Booth became business partners in the lease of the Winter Garden in New York. When John Wilkes came to New York to visit his brother Edwin, there must have been many heated discussions with Clarke and Edwin contending for the North and John Wilkes standing out, with what Edwin called 'his secession froth,' for the South. Both Clarke and Edwin refused to take John Wilkes seriously. The arguments became so strenuous that Edwin finally forbade all discussion of politics in his home. Elder brothers are prone at times to be dictatorial and to believe that younger brothers never grow up. Perhaps Wilkes Booth never did. He would no more yield his opinion than his brother and Clarke would yield theirs.

Forbidden to talk, John Wilkes wrote — a long letter setting forth his reasons for believing in the righteousness of the Southern cause and, what is quite significant, reasons for his proposed abduction of Abraham Lincoln — significant because it shows conclusively that there was a plot to abduct Lincoln, a plot which many still doubt. He sealed the letter and addressed it 'To Whom it May Concern,' in satiric imitation of Lincoln's historic paper of July 18, 1864, in which he agrees to accept peace, provided the integrity of the Union is preserved and even with the abandonment of slavery.

Booth entrusted *his* 'To Whom it May Concern' to John S. Clarke for safe-keeping. Had Clarke and Edwin Booth known of the contents of that letter, it is to be doubted that they would have done aught but laugh heartily, so convinced were they of the frothiness of John Wilkes's secessionism. How little they dreamed how completely it possessed him, that it was to take him over the top of sanity to madness!

CHAPTER VI

BOOTH'S FANATIC ZEAL

JUST how full of fanatical zeal Booth was for the cause he championed is shown by his letter to Clarke. In it he expressed his intention to capture Lincoln whose policy he declared was preparing the way for the annihilation of the South.

If, then, he could place the President in the hands of the Confederates, the troubles of the South, as he saw it, would be over and its future assured. The North, it was assumed, would be only too glad to redeem its President at the price of peace or to consent to an armistice that would lead to peace.

We think now that even the humiliation of Lincoln's capture would have made no difference in the determination of the North to suppress the rebellion, but it must be remembered that those in governmental authority were not then thinking with present-day minds made up by subsequent knowledge of the facts and the enlightening condition of perspective. The South was triumphant, while the North was disheartened. A devastating war that was to have ended in nine months had been going on for four years with victory nowhere yet in sight. The power of the North to borrow had almost reached its limit, while many of its best and most loyal minds were about reconciled to a division of the country.

Booth's letter to Clarke breathes no hint of assas-

sination. At the time he had no thought of such a thing. His was a plan to abduct, that and nothing more. The letter to Clarke shows it, his letter to the *National Intelligencer* (unfortunately destroyed by John Matthews, a fellow actor) also showed it. The testimony of all the conspirators before and after conviction corroborated it, and, finally, Booth's diary, when it was allowed to be put in evidence, not only confirmed it, but did more than anything else to prove the absurdity of the 'Great Conspiracy' involving Jefferson Davis and the leaders of the Confederacy in the assassination of Lincoln.

The only time during the abduction period when it was felt that Booth seemed inclined toward assassination occurred when the player, angered at the threat of some of his followers to withdraw unless the kidnaping of Lincoln were soon brought about, declared he knew what he would do.

'Two can play at that game!' retorted O'Laughlin.

Others protested, and Booth, finding himself in the minority, apologized and excused himself by saying that he had been drinking too much champagne. These personalities among the conspirators have been made to appear as murderous intentions upon the President. As the great enemy of the South, Booth would have shed no tears at Lincoln's death, no doubt, but there is no evidence to show that Booth then had any intention to slay the President.

As has been said, Lincoln dead had little or no value as a matter of barter for the liberation of the much-

needed Confederate prisoners, for the exaction of peace, nor yet an armistice which might lead to peace. Alive and a prisoner, the President was more than a probability for all three.

The history of Booth's letter to Clarke, originally given in the Philadelphia *Enquirer* and reproduced in the *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), April 20, 1865, five days after Lincoln's death, is as follows:

The following verbatim copy of a letter, in writing of John Wilkes Booth, has been furnished by the Hon. William Millward, U.S. Marshal of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. It was handed over to that officer by John S. Clarke, who is a brother-in-law of Mr. Booth. The history connected with it is somewhat peculiar. In November, 1864, the paper was deposited with Mr. Clarke by Booth, in a sealed envelope, 'for safe-keeping,' Mr. Clarke being ignorant of the contents.

In January last (1865) Booth called at Mr. Clarke's house, asked for the package, and it was given him. It is now supposed that he took out the paper and added his signature, which appears to be in a different ink from that used in the body of the letter, and also from the language employed could not have been put to it originally. Afterwards he returned the package again to Mr. Clarke for safe-keeping, sealed and bearing the superscription 'J. Wilkes Booth.' The enclosure was preserved by the family without suspicion of its nature. After the afflicting information of the assassination of the President, which came upon the family of Mr. Clarke with crushing force, it was considered proper to open the envelope. There were found in it the following paper, with some seven-thirty United States bonds and certificates of shares in oil companies.

Mr. Clarke promptly handed over the paper to Marshal

Millward, in whose custody it now remains. From a perusal of this paper it seems to have been prepared by Booth as a vindication of some desperate act which he had in contemplation: and from the language used it is probable that it was a plot to abduct the President and carry him off to Virginia.

There is no doubt about the meaning of the communication. It shows plainly Booth's intention to abduct Lincoln and gives his reasons therefor. This letter was brushed aside or unnoticed in the conviction and statement of Secretary of War Stanton of the existence of a 'Great Conspiracy' on the part of Jefferson Davis and other Southern leaders to assassinate Lincoln and the members of his Cabinet. Believing the Government to have first-hand information, the people of the North accepted the Government's statement. The letter is as follows:

—— 1864

My dear Sir:

You may use this as you think best. But as *some* may wish to know *when*, who and *why* as I know not *how* to direct, I give it (in the words of your master) — 'To whom it may concern.'

Right or wrong, God judge me, not man. For be my motives good or bad, of one thing I am sure, the lasting condemnation of the North. I love peace more than life. Have loved the Union beyond expression. For four years I have waited, hoped and prayed for the dark clouds to break and for a restoration of our former sunshine. To wait longer would be a crime. All hope for peace is dead. My prayers have proved as idle as my hopes. God's will be done. I go to see and share the bitter end.

Booth's Fanatic Zeal

I have ever held the South were right. The very nomination of Abraham Lincoln, four years ago, spoke very plainly of war, war, upon Southern rights and institutions. His election proved it. 'Await an overt act.' Yes, till you are bound and plundered. What folly. The South was wise. Who thinks of argument or pastime when the finger of his enemy presses the trigger? In a *foreign* war, I, too, could say 'country right or wrong.' But in a struggle *such as ours* (where the brother tries to pierce the brother's heart) for God's sake choose the right. When a country like this spurns *justice* from her side, she forfeits the allegiance of every honest freeman and should leave him, untrammeled by any fealty soever, to act as his conscience may approve. People of the North, to hate tyranny, to love liberty and justice, to strike at wrong and oppression, was the teaching of our fathers. The study of our early history will not let me forget, and may it never.

The country was formed for the white, not for the black man. And looking upon African slavery from the same standpoint held by the noble framers of our Constitution, I, for one, have ever considered it one of the greatest blessings (both for themselves and us) that God ever bestowed upon a favored nation. Witness heretofore our wealth and power: witness their elevation and enlightenment above their race elsewhere. I have lived among it most of my life, and I have seen *less* harsh treatment from master to man than I have beheld in the North from father to son. Yet, heaven knows, *no one* would be willing to do *more* for the Negro race than I, could I but see the way to *still better their condition*.

But Lincoln's policy is only preparing a way for their total annihilation. The South *are not, nor have they* been fighting for the continuation of slavery.[1] The first battle of Bull Run did away with that idea. Their causes for war

[1] After the battle of Bull Run little was said in the South of slavery, and much of 'fighting for our firesides.'

have been *as noble and greater far than those that urged our fathers on. Even* should we allow they were wrong at the beginning of this contest, *cruelty and injustice* have made the wrong become the right, and they stand now (before the wonder and admiration of the world) as a noble band of patriotic heroes. Hereafter, reading of their deeds, Thermopylæ will be forgotten.

When I aided in the capture and execution of John Brown (who was a murderer on our Western border and who was fairly tried and convicted before an impartial judge and jury, of treason, and who, by the way, has since been made a god) I was proud of my little share in the transaction, for I deemed it my duty that I was helping our common country to perform an act of justice. But what was a crime in poor John Brown is considered (by themselves) as the greatest and only virtue of the whole Republican party. Strange transmigration. *Vice so* becomes a *virtue*, simply because more indulged in. I thought then as *now* that the Abolitionists were the *only traitors* in the land and that the entire party deserved the fate of poor John Brown, not because they wish to abolish slavery, but on account of the means they have ever used to effect that abolition. If Brown were living I doubt whether he *himself* would set slavery against the Union. Most or many in the North do, and openly curse the Union, if the South are to return and retain a *single right* guaranteed to them by every tie which we once revered as sacred.

The South can make no choice. It is either extermination or slavery for *themselves* (worse than death) to draw from. I know my choice.

I have also studied hard to know upon what grounds the right of a state to secede has been denied, when our very name United States, and the Declaration of Independence *both* provide for secession.[1]

[1] Lincoln maintained convincingly in his Cooper Union speech — and

But there is no time for words. I write in haste. I know how foolish I shall be deemed for taking such a step as this, where on the one side, I have many friends and many things to make me happy, where my profession *alone* has gained me an income of more than twenty thousand dollars a year, and where my great personal ambition in my profession has such a great field for labor. On the other hand, the South have never bestowed upon me one kind word: a place where I must become a private soldier or a beggar. To give up all the *former* for the *latter*, *besides* my mother and my sisters, whom I love so dearly (although they so widely differ from me in opinion), seems insane: but God is my judge. I love justice more than a country that disowns it, more than fame and wealth; more (Heaven pardon me if I am wrong), more than a happy home.

I have never been upon a battle field; but, O my countrymen, could you all see the *reality* or effects of this horrid war as I have seen them (in every state save Virginia) I know you would think like me, and would pray the Almighty to create in the Northern mind a *sense of right and justice* (even if it should possess no seasoning of mercy) and that He would dry up the sea of blood between us which is daily growing wider. Alas, poor country. Is she to meet her threatened doom?

Four years ago I would have given a thousand lives to see her remain (as I had always known her) powerful and unbroken. And even now I would hold my life at naught to see her what she was. Oh, my friends, if the fearful scenes of the last four years had never been enacted, or if what has been was a frightful dream from which we could now awake, with what flowing hearts could we bless our God

often previously — that as it took *all* the parties to an agreement to make that agreement, so it required all to rescind it. The seceding States then could not withdraw from the Union, he declared, without the consent of all the other States.

and pray for His continued favor. How I have loved the *old flag* can never be known. A few years since and the entire world could boast of *none* so pure and spotless. But I have of late been seeing and hearing of the *bloody* deeds of which she has been *made the emblem*. O, how I have longed to see her break from the mist of blood that circles round her folds, spoiling her beauty and tarnishing her honor. But no, day by day, has she been dragged deeper and deeper into cruelty and oppression till now (in my eyes) her once bright red stripes look like *bloody gashes* on the face of heaven. I look now upon my early admiration of her glories as a dream. My love (as things stand to-day) is for the South alone. Nor do I deem it a dishonor in attempting to make for her a prisoner of this man to whom she owes so much misery.

If success attends me, I go penniless to her side. They say she has found that 'last ditch' which the North has so long derided and has been endeavoring to force her in, forgetting they are our brothers, and that it's impolitic to force on an enemy to madness. Should I reach her in safety and find it true, I will proudly beg permission to triumph or die in that same 'ditch' by her side.

A Confederate doing duty on his own responsibility.

J. Wilkes Booth

How far Booth's intentions were from assassination at this time is shown by his remark, 'Nor do I deem it a dishonor to make for her [the South] a *prisoner* of this man to whom she owes so much misery.' Final and conclusive proof of the plot to carry off the President is shown in Booth's diary, taken from his body by Colonel Conger after Booth had been shot. 'For months we had planned to abduct,' he wrote. At this moment, with capture and death imminent, on the

likelihood of which he reasoned, there would be no necessity or object in false statement. That statement was 'the dying declaration of a man, assassin though he be, who was speaking the truth, probably to himself, as between himself and God.' [1]

In the Clarke letter he seemed honestly eager for peace between the warring people — a peace for which he had 'waited, hoped and prayed' for four years, and which he finally believed to be so hopeless that, in making Lincoln a prisoner, he is willing to make any effort, take any personal risk to accomplish it. Like most ardent secessionists, he was unalterably convinced of the justice of slavery, 'one of the worst causes,' as Grant said, 'for which a people ever fought, and one for which there was the least excuse.' [2]

As the country grew and the South lost political control of the Nation, slavery became doomed. Humanity felt that if it could not be otherwise abolished, the sacrifice of even a million lives was not too great a price to pay for the freedom of a race.[3] With amazing inconsistency Booth, with the South, saw

[1] Benj. F. Butler, at the Surratt Trial.

[2] Grant's full expression of his feeling at the time of Lee's surrender at Appomattox, April 9, 1865, was: 'I felt like anything but rejoicing at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people ever fought and one for which there was the least excuse.' (U. S. Grant: *Memoirs*, II, 489.)

[3] Darwin wrote our Asa Gray: 'Some folks, and I am one of them, even wish to God, tho' at the loss of millions of lives, that the North would proclaim a crusade against slavery.' (Rhodes: *History of the United States, from the Compromise of 1850*, III, 511, note 1.)

only a 'war upon Southern rights and institutions and nothing of the rights of a race of people. Long abuse of those rights had brought the South to doubt that slaves could really be regarded as people.

Booth's 'Heaven knows, *no one* would be willing to do more for the negro race than I, could I but see the way to still better their condition,' was but an echo of the general cry of the South: 'The slaves lead the happiest life in the world. They have no responsibility, no morals, and everything is theirs but freedom. What more could anybody ask?'

That it was the South which was 'spurning justice' never penetrated the mind of this callow conspirator, though it was often called to his attention. He was silent on that part of the Declaration of Independence which states that 'All men are created equal and are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,' and hailed as words of inspiration, evidently, Jefferson Davis's proposition, laid down by him in the Senate debate, 'We want nothing more than a simple declaration that negro slaves are property, and we want the recognition of the obligation of the Federal Government to protect that property.' [1] It was the Abolitionists that roused the sullen hatred of the South and of Booth. To them the mere thought of submission to the inauguration of 'a black Republican President' was unthinkable. When, later, Lincoln issued his

[1] We hear little of this talk after Bull Run, and much of the cry for independence as a nation, on the part of the South. With independence the South might use its pleasure about the retention of slavery. It would not be difficult to guess what that pleasure would be.

Emancipation Proclamation, it served only to embitter the South by giving force to the argument 'that the war of the North was a crusade against their social institutions.'

Hereafter it may be possible, as Booth says, that in reading of those who fought for the freedom of the South (claimed by many to be really for the continuance of slavery), Thermopylæ will be forgotten; but it is to be noted that, even at this brief distance from our Civil War, that historical memory seems not to have suffered.

The worst fears of the South having been realized, if he, Booth, can but capture this 'black Republican' — the head and front, the inspiring sources of those perfidious Abolitionists — and place him in the hands of the Confederate authorities, peace must result, and, per consequence, he, Booth, would be hailed as a great man, the pacificator of the warring nations.[1]

The abduction of Lincoln was no mere whim on the part of Booth to leap into sudden and lasting fame. It was a masterstroke to which for four years he had given his every waking thought, and for the accomplishment of which he was willing to sacrifice all that was precious to him. Moreover, it was an ambition which was not only encouraged by the attitude of the South, which was eager for peace with independence — and slavery, but also by a large number of people

[1] In Booth's estimation, it was as fine a cause as that for which Tell slew Gessler or Brutus, Cæsar. Better; for in this abduction there was no thought of slaying.

in the North whose sacrifices of blood and treasure had wholly dulled their senses to the principle involved, the removal of the blot of slavery from our civilization.

In the fervor of his patriotism Booth loses sight of his humor, of which he had a plentiful store. 'But there is no time for words,' he writes Clarke. The letter contains over thirteen hundred of them. There is no doubt, however, that the thoughts occupying Booth's mind at this time were of a nature, more is the pity, to banish all consideration of humor.

This zealous young conspirator is human enough, too, to want us to know how great is the sacrifice he is making 'in taking such a step,' that is, in heading such a plot. He does not hesitate to tell us that, besides friends and family who 'widely differ from me in opinion' — are not sympathizers with the Confederate cause — he is abandoning his profession which '*alone*, has gained me an income of more than twenty thousand dollars a year.' It is evident from this that he wishes it distinctly understood that no consideration of family, and certainly no base matter of money, has influenced him — nor had they — that he has been guided solely by humane and heroic ideals. It is difficult, however, not to smile at the boyish naïveté of this.

He seems a little beside the mark when he says, 'The South have never bestowed upon me one kind word,' and argues that, though some people may think him insane for making these sacrifices, he is willing to

let the matter rest with God — with Whom it must rest, willy-nilly, of course.

Quite in the vein of 'Marc Antony,' one of the last of his stage performances, 'this Confederate doing duty on his own responsibility' rather inconsistently addresses the Northern people as 'O my countrymen' and feels assured that, if they could but see 'the effects of this war' as he has seen them, they would think as he thinks and pray God to awaken the Northern mind to a 'sense of right and justice.' Just at this time, men like Cobden, Disraeli, Lord Northcote, John Bright, Charles Darwin, and other great humans were thanking God for having done that very thing.

How full of melodrama it seems to hear this would-be abductor exclaim, 'How I loved the old flag, nobody knows!' It was anything but melodramatic to Booth. To him it was the deepest kind of tragic sincerity, as it would be to any ardent young man so overwrought with fanatic purpose. Of course nobody knew how he 'loved the old flag.' It was the better part of wisdom for him to be reserved as to his feeling about the 'old flag'; but supposing the whole world to have known about it, how pitifully few would have cared! But like all zealots, the things that occupied his mind seemed of world importance.

Equally buskined, too, is the expression of longing to see the old flag 'break from the mist of blood that circles round her folds, spoiling her beauty and tarnishing her honor'—and 'her once bright red stripes look like bloody gashes on the face of heaven'; but he

means it all. Nothing less flourishing would at all comport with the feelings and ideas of this modern Icarus. No doubt he was proud of the phrases after he had written them, for he was pleased to think that he was not without power of literary expression. What a pity it is that this brilliant, handsome, young dreamer had not had, like his brother Edwin, the good fortune to come frequently in contact with a mind and spirit like Adam Badeau's! What a difference it would have made to the history of the drama and to the history of this nation!

It disturbed Booth greatly to realize that he might be hated by the people of the North for abducting the President. He was so constituted that the thought of anybody hating him gave him pain. He wanted to be loved and applauded by everybody. So exaggerated were his instincts for heroics that he actually believed he might decamp with Lincoln and that the extreme audacity of the act, performed with dispatch and grace, might induce the North to applaud even while it grieved over the loss of its President. He was assuredly encouraged in this belief by the attitude of many Northerners.

Of course he did not deem it 'a dishonor in attempting to make a prisoner of this man.' He serves notice to the people of the North that John Wilkes Booth is incapable of doing anything dishonorable, and if they will kindly put themselves in his place and look upon the carrying off of their President in the right light, as *he*, Booth, looks upon it, for example, realizing the

great good that will come of the cessation of bloodshed and the return to the blessings of peace — they will not only understand but rejoice. He believed they would.

And what a melodramatic, theatric ring has that intention of Booth to 'go penniless' to the side of the South, 'to triumph or die' in that 'last ditch' which the derisive North was insisting the South had found.[1] John Wilkes Booth was of the theater, theatric. He lived in a time when tragedy and melodrama were highly in the ascendant. It is not strange then that one of his temperamental nature, his biased mind, his freedom from mental direction, and, above all, one who was singularly the product of his time and environment should go to extremes of thought and expression in heroic actions.

Poor, misguided, unsuccessful John Wilkes Booth! How well you knew that the patriots of to-day were the successful conspirators of yesterday! How much you believed that you were one of the conspirators of to-day who would be a heralded patriot of to-morrow!

[1] Just about this time he was binding Herold to him with hoops of steel by promises of performances at Richmond in which not only Booth but Herold would appear, feeding Herold's fledgling fancy for the stage with golden dreams of public applause.

CHAPTER VII

BOOTH'S BAND OF CONSPIRATORS

When Booth had conceived his amazing plan to abduct the President of the United States, he readily perceived that he could not carry it out alone. He required help, fellow conspirators. These men must be bold, daring fellows who could ride hard and long and, in case of attack, who could shoot. Above all they must be selected from Southern stock and be quite as enthusiastic in the cause of the South as himself. He made his selection and it seems, with a single exception, Lewis (Powell) Payne, to have been a poor one. They were a nervous, skittish lot and were constantly of the opinion that the attempt would better be given up, that the Government was already aware of their plans, etc., etc. Booth was at great trouble and expense to hold them together.

There was much justification in their fear, for it seemed incredible that half a dozen young men, armed to the teeth and mounted on horseback, could go about Washington, which was under military rule, and the Government be wholly ignorant of their doings, especially as they were shadowing the White House carriage and keeping a strict watch on the comings and goings of the President.

Next to Booth, the most intelligent of the bravos was John H. Surratt. He was the son of Mrs. Mary

BOOTH'S ACCOMPLICES

Left to right from top: Edward Spangler, John H. Surratt (in uniform of the Papal Zouaves), Samuel Arnold, George E. Atzerodt, Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, Michael O'Laughlin, David E. Herold, Lewis Payne

Surratt, who was hanged as a conspirator and who, as Andrew Johnson said, 'kept the nest where the egg [of conspiracy] was hatched.' That is, she kept a boarding-house in Washington where Booth and some of his henchmen met and plotted. She was undoubtedly aware of the intention to abduct Lincoln and probably wholly unaware of Booth's later and sudden determination to shoot him. With his intimate knowledge of lower Maryland and Virginia and the route to Richmond, Surratt could render Booth invaluable service. He went to great pains to seek him out. Southern emissaries in Canada likely called Booth's attention to Surratt.

When Booth had found Surratt, which was in a roundabout way, the latter was suspicious of the distinguished and polished young actor. It was evident to Surratt that Booth was 'cultivating' him. For what purpose? Before he would in any way compromise himself, Surratt meant to know. Booth soon apprised him of the fact that his sympathy was wholly for the South, but still Surratt held off. After Surratt's trial and he had been freed, feeling in need of money he gave a lecture at Rockville, Maryland, in which he told many interesting things of the plot to carry off the President and, having no longer any fear of the hand of the law, it is extremely likely that what he told was the truth. Also from that lecture we learn not only how Booth and Surratt met, but precisely what prompted Booth to undertake so hazardous a thing as the kidnaping of Lincoln.

When Booth had met Surratt and the time had come (fall of 1864) for Booth to make a confidant of him, Surratt was very cautious. 'Mr. Booth,' said the wary one, 'it is useless for you to seek any information from me at all. I know who you are and I know what your intentions are.'

Booth had been down into lower Maryland, where he had met Dr. Samuel Mudd, and under the pretense of buying 'farming lands' and riding horses (he purchased a horse), was looking over the ground with which, for his purpose, it was necessary for him to have familiar acquaintance. Indeed, he must be able to recognize every feature of the landscape, night or day. In short, it was the route over which, if his plans carried, he intended to convey the President as a prisoner to Richmond. In southern Maryland he was among Southern sympathizers and made it known that he needed some one who knew the territory thoroughly. On learning that Dr. Mudd knew Surratt, he solicited an introduction. Later, as Booth and Dr. Mudd were walking along Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington they met Surratt and Booth was made acquainted with him.

'We met several times,' says Surratt, 'but as he seemed to be reticent with regard to his purposes and very anxious to get all the information out of me he could, I refused to tell him anything at all.'

And no wonder! The actor's sympathy for the South might well be a ruse to extract incriminating admissions from Surratt, who, by what was known as

the 'underground route to Richmond,' was engaged in transporting papers and dispatches from Confederate authorities to their agents in Canada. Surratt was not to be caught napping. According to Surratt, Booth hesitated to unfold his plan and only decided to do so on Surratt's promise of secrecy, a promise which Surratt refused to give. He regarded the request as a reflection.

'I will do nothing of the kind,' said the dispatch bearer. 'You know very well that I am a Southern man. If you cannot trust me, we will separate.'

Booth finally decided to unburden himself to Surratt, but not without great precaution.

'I'll confide my plans to you, but first let me make known the motives that actuate me,' said Booth. 'In Northern prisons there are many thousands of men whom the United States Government refuses to exchange. You know as well as I do the effort that has been made to bring about the desired exchange. Aside from the great suffering they are compelled to undergo [if physical suffering was meant, Confederate prisoners in the North were much better cared for than Northern prisoners in the South], we are sadly in want of them as soldiers. We cannot spare one man, whereas the United States Government is willing to let their soldiers remain in our prisons because she has no need of them. I have a proposition to make to you which, I think, if we can carry out, would bring about the desired exchange.'

Here Booth paused, as one who did not mean to go

further unless encouraged to do so. Surratt, in a doubtful frame of mind, was equally obdurate. 'A long and pointed silence' ensued. Then deciding there could be no harm and that there might be an advantage in listening to Booth, Surratt finally asked:

'Well, sir, what is your proposition?'

Booth, accustomed to a more courtier-like attention, sat quiet a moment scanning the face of Surratt, not quite convinced of the wisdom of proceeding further. Without speaking he arose from his chair in a way that must have lent the impression to Surratt that, offended, he was about to quit the room. Instead of which, the player went mysteriously to the bed and looked under it. He then peered into the wardrobe, the doorway, and passageway and, advancing furtively toward Surratt, made use of an expression which, in those days, was often heard in the theater:

'We must be careful; the very walls have ears!'

Drawing his chair up close to Surratt in an impressive, melodramatic way, he said in a whisper:

'It is to kidnap President Lincoln and carry him off to Richmond.'

'Kidnap President Lincoln and carry him off to Richmond!' repeated the incredulous spy. He confesses that he 'stood aghast at the proposition,' and looked upon it as a 'foolhardy undertaking.' The idea of being able successfully to seize Mr. Lincoln in the Capital of the United States, surrounded by thousands

of his soldiers, and carry him off to Richmond seemed foolish. The 'unparalleled audacity of the scheme' frightened and amazed him. Booth, having committed himself, went on eloquently to explain how easily it could all be accomplished, 'as for example in one of Lincoln's various rides to and from the Soldiers' Home,' which Lincoln often made with a single attendant or alone.

Surratt, with his experience, his associations, and, as has been said, his intimate knowledge of the route to Richmond, was most essential to Booth in the abduction plot, and we may well believe that the amateur conspirator made full use of his powers of presentation and charm of personality as he entered into 'minute details of the proposed capture, and of the various parts to be performed by the actors in the performance.'

After two days' consideration, Surratt had convinced himself that what he afterwards regarded as 'a foolhardy undertaking' was a perfectly practical, if risky, plan. He consented to be a party to the abduction and gave his hearty allegiance to Booth.

Booth's prime object in the abduction of Lincoln was, of course, as he told Surratt, to assist the South to gain her independence. Surratt, a determined secessionist, was not less ambitious than Booth in that regard nor less so than any other patriotic Southerner. Surratt had never thought of the carrying off of Lincoln as a means to serve the South, but, when the plan was presented to him with all the passionate en-

thusiasm of Booth, he found it, after days of consideration, irresistible. In the endeavor to justify himself for entering into the scheme he said:

'I now reverse the case: Where is there a young man in the North, with one spark of patriotism in his heart, who would not have joined with enthusiastic ardor in any undertaking for the capture of Jefferson Davis and brought him to Washington? There is not one who would not have done so! So I was led on by a desire to assist the South in gaining her independence. I had no hesitation in taking part in anything honorable that might tend toward accomplishment of that object.'

During our Civil War, to the tune of 'Glory, Glory, Hallelujah,' child and adult, soldier and civilian of the North, sang of their intention to 'Hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree.' No other kind of tree would do. It must be a *sour* apple tree as evincing a full measure of patriotic hatred. There is no doubt that, if anybody had been able to bring Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, a prisoner to the North, the gleeful rejoicing would have been, as Surratt intimates, immeasurable. More surely than that a monument had been erected in the United States to the English spy, Major André, would one have been set up to perpetuate the glory of the captor, or captors, of Jefferson Davis.

During the World War if Kaiser Wilhelm could have been trapped by some daring young patriot and brought to the Allies, is it to be questioned for a mo-

ment that anything less than triumphal arches everywhere — except in Germany and Austria — would have rewarded the captors? Even if the attempt at such a capture had failed, the world, aside from Germany and Austria, would have cried sympathetically, 'Hard luck!' and bemoaned the failure.

What was justification to Surratt for entering into a plot to abduct the President of the United States was justification for John Wilkes Booth. The great mistake Booth made was in failing to put his plan into successful execution. Nobody loves a failure. He hated himself for his failure. He cursed the Fates which denied him propitious opportunity, but most of all he cursed his weak-kneed fellow conspirators who, with one exception, Payne, were frightened of their shadows. They were all confident, especially Surratt, that the Government knew of the plot, and were in terror of momentary seizure when, as a matter of fact, the Government had no inkling of their plans. In the persons of General Lee, General Jackson, and other Southern generals, and in the erroneous obsession of General McClellan that the troops of the South vastly outnumbered those of the North, the United States Government had a gigantic scare of its own on its hands. Its task was so great in preparing for the war and in trying to push McClellan into action that it had no time and seemingly no thought of the proper protection of the Chief Magistrate.

There is no doubt that Booth honestly believed that he had evolved a successful plan 'to dry up the sea of

blood between us which is daily growing wider.' Nor is it to be doubted that the carrying off of the President would have led to great embarrassment and complications, such as the recognition of the South and the assistance to her from England and the Continental nations. It might well have made the Northern Copperhead cry of 'Peace at any price' irresistible. That would have meant a divided nation, the independence of the South.

'Days, weeks, and months passed by without an opportunity presenting itself for us to attempt the capture,' continues Surratt. 'We seldom saw one another, owing to the many rumors about that a conspiracy of some kind was being concocted in Washington.' The Capital, once a part of Maryland territory, was, at the time, a seething mass of disaffection and disloyalty. Few Southerners — and the place was full of them — but believed the city would soon be captured by the army of the constantly successful General Lee.

'We had all arrangements perfected,' says Surratt. 'Boats were in readiness to carry us across the river. One day we received information that the President would visit the Seventh Street Hospital for the purpose of being present at an entertainment to be given for the wounded soldiers. The report only reached us about three quarters of an hour before the time appointed, but so perfect was our communication that we were instantly in our saddles and on the way to the hospital. This was between one and two o'clock in the

afternoon. It was our intention to seize the carriage, which was drawn by a splendid pair of horses, and have one of our men mount the box and drive for southern Maryland via Benning's Bridge. We felt confident that all the cavalry in the city would never overtake us. We were all mounted on swift horses besides having a thorough knowledge of the country, it being determined to abandon the carriage after passing the city limits. Upon the suddenness of our blow and the celerity of our movements we depended for success. By the time the alarm could have been given and horses saddled, we would have been on our way through southern Maryland toward the Potomac River.

'To our great disappointment, however, the President was not there, but one of the Government officials — Mr. Chase, if I mistake not. We did not disturb him, as we wanted a bigger chase than he could have afforded us. It was our last attempt. We soon after this became convinced that we could not remain much longer undiscovered and that we must abandon our enterprise. Accordingly a separation soon took place, and I never after saw any of the party except one, and that was when I was on my way from Richmond to Canada on business of quite a different nature.

'Such is the story of our abduction plot — rash, perhaps foolish, but honorable, I maintain, in its means and ends; actuated by such motives as would, under similar circumstances, be a sufficient inducement to thousands of Southern young men to have embarked in a similar enterprise.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE SURRENDER OF LEE — BOOTH'S DESPAIR

After the failure to abduct the President and the scare of detection which followed, the conspirators scattered leisurely. Payne went to Baltimore and then to New York, to which place he was followed shortly by Booth. Arnold and O'Laughlin, disgusted with the lack of success, went back to their homes. Weichman, the would-be priest, whom Booth distrusted, remained in Washington at his position in the Government office. The desperado Payne, son of a Baptist minister, ex-Confederate soldier wounded and captured at Gettysburg, worshiper at the shrine of Booth, and Herold, Booth's flabby acolyte whom Payne called a 'blab,' and also the unclean-looking Atzerodt, the ferryman and friend of spies at Port Tobacco, hung about the chief conspirator, subjects of his bounty, waiting, like Wilkins Micawber, for something to turn up.

In this they were encouraged by Booth, who had not abandoned a last hope that something might yet arise to bring success to his plan to carry off the President. The reëlection and inauguration of 'the tyrant Lincoln,' whom they regarded as so inimical to the South and its people, had spurred on the conspirators to the 'big effort' which had ended so discouragingly and just at the moment when they had fondly hoped to end the political career of 'the nigger-loving railsplitter' from Illinois.

Surrender of Lee—Booth's Despair

Booth had spent thousands of dollars furthering what he deemed his patriotic plan in the interest of the South. He had refused to accept lucrative engagements in order to be near the scene of expected action. Within the limit of his power no trouble nor expense was too great for him to undertake, and the enthusiasm he manifested at all times in his cause was unbounded.

Letters (originals in possession of the War Department) from his mother and friends were ignored because of his absorption in the plan to aid the South by the abduction of Lincoln. The keen instinct of the mother scented something wrong. She was alone and he would not come to her. Managers sought to engage his services and he would not play, and she may have heard something of his mysterious trips to Canada, where enemy emissaries plotted against the Union. She knew of his enthusiasm for the Southern cause over which her son Edwin and he had argued bitterly, and she may have known of her boy's consorting with radical Southern sympathizers in Washington. Here in a letter, written 'about two weeks before the asassination,' speaks all a mother's tender solicitude and fear for her son, nearer the brink of destruction than her wildest imaginings could conceive:

J. Wilkes Booth, Ford's Theater March 26, 1865
Washington, D.C.

My dear Boy:

I have got yours. I was very glad to hear from you. I did part from you sadly, and still feel sad, very much so.

June [her eldest son, Junius] has just left me. He staid as long as he could. I am now quite alone. Rose [her daughter, Rosalie] has not returned yet. I am miserable enough. I have never doubted your love and devotion to me; in fact I always gave you praise for being the fondest of all my boys, but since you leave me to grief I must doubt it. I am no Roman mother. I love my dear ones before country or anything else. Heaven guard you, is my constant prayer.

Your Loving Mother

M. A. Booth [1]

Fear of detection having subsided, Booth was soon back in Washington with renewed efforts and increased energy for the furtherance of his plan. It is rather difficult to understand just why this band of conspirators was not swiftly apprehended and clapped into jail, and it seems incredible that a bungling lot of men, for the most part composed of anything but the material of which successful conspirators are made and, with the exception of Booth and Weichman, who had no visible means of support, should have been permitted to roam the streets of the Nation's Capital not only undetected but not even registered or 'accounted for.' While Stanton, Secretary of War, was forever cautioning the President to be careful and while there were rumors afloat of the intended assassination of the heads of the Federal as well as of the Confederate Government, some of this tiny band of Falstaffian conspirators were quietly boasting to

[1] For this and other letters from anxious friends and first given publication, see *Collier's Weekly* for December 27, 1924; William G. Shepherd: *They Tried to Stop Booth.*

friends of large sums of money which were to come to them as the result of a bold and sudden stroke of fortune. At the head of the Secret Service Bureau at the time was General Lafayette C. Baker, upon whom Stanton leaned heavily and in whom he had the greatest confidence. General Baker and his staff, endowed with extraordinary power, sometimes justified that confidence, but that the Bureau should have failed to scotch this almost open conspiracy occasions astonishment and poignant regret.

National events of great importance followed swiftly now. They soon made further thought of abduction unnecessary and futile. The South largely began to think its cause desperate. Men deserted in large numbers. Southern papers of the period spoke of the 'Rebellion' as 'The People's War' and said that the people were now tired of it. Rhodes says, quoting from these journals, 'It is estimated that there were one hundred thousand deserters scattered over the Confederacy.'

Richmond fell and the great captain, the great bulwark of secession, General Robert E. Lee, surrendered. It was close to the end. In a conversation with a brother actor, John Matthews, on Pennsylvania Avenue, Booth, seated on the horse which was to carry him so swiftly out of the alleyway in the rear of Ford's Theater after the commission of his terrible deed, saw Lee's officers marching through Washington as prisoners of war. It affected him profoundly. Clasping his hand to his head, in a despairful voice he

exclaimed, 'My God, I have no country now!' Setting spurs to his horse, he dashed down the street.

The fall of Richmond was the cause of deep rejoicing throughout the Nation. Cannons boomed out the exultations of the people while bonfires flared the general joy. Strangers shook hands and patted each other on the back while they exchanged words of congratulation and gratitude. Young and even elderly people acted foolishly in the effort to express their happiness. Business ceased and the courts adjourned. A ship, a special steamer, was dispatched to England to apprise that nation of the glad tidings. 'Of peculiar significance in these days of rejoicing,' says an authoritative historian, 'was the fact that for the most part the Northern people were full of generous feeling for the South.'

It is pointed out that under all the rejoicing, frivolous or serious, there was a deep note of religious feeling, that in the stock exchanges, boards of trade, in churches and many gatherings, people united in singing the Doxology — 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.'

Motley wrote: 'Twenty thousand men in the busiest haunts of trade in one of the most thronged cities of the world uncovered their heads and sang the psalm of thanksgiving.'

'The news, my dear Charles,' wrote Lowell to Charles Eliot Norton, 'is from Heaven. I felt a strange and tender exaltation. I wanted to laugh and I wanted to cry, and I ended by holding my peace and

being devoutly thankful. There is something magnificent in having a country to love.' In these few phrases was summed up the exact feeling in the heart of the people.

The last Cabinet meeting Lincoln held was on April 14th. Grant was present and all were in great expectation of news from Sherman telling of the surrender of General Johnston, who, except perhaps Kirby Smith, commanded the last of the Confederate soldiers in any number. Showing the magnanimity for which he was ever distinguished and which has never been approached by the ruler of any nation, Lincoln said: 'I hope there will be no persecution, no bloody work after the war is over. *Nobody need expect me to take any part in hanging or killing these men, even the worst of them.*'

Propelled at him from all sides came the injunction: 'Do not allow Jefferson Davis, the President of the Southern Confederacy, to escape the law. He must be hanged!' And the reply Lincoln made was, 'Judge not that ye be not judged.' Vastly different was the attitude of Johnson. At this time the Vice-President declared that, if he could have his way, he would hang every rebel south of the Mason and Dixon line. When the news had come of the surrender of Richmond and of General Lee and the Cabinet had met, there was some embarrassment as to how the meeting should begin in face of such soul-stirring events. Then happened that which would form the subject of a beautiful picture which has never been painted.

With one accord the President and the Cabinet sank to their knees in a prayer of thanksgiving.

All eyes were now turned toward the White House and its pathetic occupant who, through the struggle of stressful years, had so ably borne the burden of the Republic, the man who 'had come to know greatness but never ease and power, never happiness,' as Roosevelt said of him on the anniversary of the Emancipator's hundredth birthday. It was now the little hour, too sadly brief, of Abraham Lincoln's great victory. He had labored amid distrust, toleration, and contempt against almost irresistible opposition from within and without. He now stood revealed to the world as the most gentle, most magnanimous, most Christ-like ruler of all time.

On April 9th, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox, and on April 10th, Lincoln returned to Washington from the seat of war. The city was beside itself with excitement and joy at the now certain end of the strife. On the evening of April 11, 1865, the jubilant masses surged as with a single impulse to the Executive Mansion and clamored for a speech. They wanted to see the President, to attest their respect and affection, to rejoice with him, to witness his relief and his joy in the termination of the trials to which he had been subjected in the Nation's behalf.

John Wilkes Booth, the fanatic, and Lewis Payne, the desperado, well fortified with liquor, went with the crowd, went to gaze upon the prey which had escaped them and whose non-capture they were firmly

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Taken by Alexander Gardner at the White House, April 9th or 10th, 1865, while Lincoln was sharpening a pencil for his son Tad. The photographs taken at this sitting were the last taken of Lincoln

convinced had made the difference of defeat to the cause of the South. They were there to indulge in muttered sneers at the gloating of the President. They were all too confident that he would gloat. Had he not cause? How foreign to his nature was such a thing they did not know, and of the magnanimous thoughts in the mind and heart of Lincoln for the people of the defeated South they had no conception. It is to be doubted if they were much impressed with the President's declaration that the rebellious States were to be treated as if they had not seceded, and the President now gave his attention to the negro for whose freedom, unquestionably, the war was fought. What was Lincoln saying? — 'It is also unsatisfactory to some that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man. I would myself prefer that it were conferred on the very intelligent and on those who serve our country as soldiers.' Had Booth and Payne heard aright? Conferring the privilege to vote on 'niggers'! Giving such a creature a privilege that would place him on an equality with white men! Incredible! Impossible! All the pangs of defeated ambition in the failure of the plan to abduct the President in order to force an exchange of prisoners of war or to bring about a peace agreement favorable to the cause of Southern independence were lost sight of in the anguish of this new outrage. The worst fears of the chief conspirator were realized. To Booth and to Payne, whose minds were already aflame with rage, disappointment, and alcoholic stimulus, the man who could give utterance

to such a dastardly humiliating thought — worse, who could determine to put into practice a procedure that would, to their thinking, outrage every inbred, sacred instinct of the South — deserved annihilation, nothing less. At that moment, not before, was born the determination if the opportunity occurred to destroy the President.

One almost sees the giant Payne fingering his revolver, scarcely able to refrain from shooting to kill, and hears Booth, greatly excited by the Southerner's sympathetic indignation, urging him to shoot. But the feelings of Payne are not so outraged that he is not able to realize the strong improbability of the chance to escape if he should be insane enough to attempt the President's life. As Booth and Payne left the White House grounds and walked around the square, Booth muttered to Payne (according to Major Eckert, then Assistant Secretary of War, who interviewed the imprisoned Payne): 'This is the last speech he will ever make.'

CHAPTER IX

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ASSASSINATION

The sickening news of the fall of Richmond, the still more disheartening intelligence of the surrender of General Lee, the terrifying determination, as heard from Lincoln's own lips, to give the negro the right to vote — all of which Booth felt might have been averted had he been able to carry out his plan to abduct the President — was more than the rabid secessionism of John Wilkes Booth could bear.

In a letter the writer possesses, Edwin Booth, writing to his brother Junius, in the earlier years speaks of John Wilkes as abstemious, an unusual trait in a young and popular man during those days of much drinking. But now his mind, constantly stimulated with drink, taken with the thought of deadening chagrin and disappointment, or spurring him on to the deed, took on an exaggeration of inherited imbalance. It completely lost its equilibrium. He was ready, recklessly eager, for any step, however wild and terrible, that, as a last resort, might help the fast-fading cause of the South, if the opportunity would only occur. Sadly, we know, it did occur in Lincoln's attendance at the theater which, of all theaters, Booth knew the best.

In the front of Grover's Theater, Washington, there was a billiard saloon kept by John Deery, a champion at the game. Deery had known Booth from his boy-

hood. When in Washington, Booth made Deery's resort a sort of loafing place. It was much frequented by notables and the better class of people. The attraction to Booth was not billiards, but the bar, which was famous for its viands. Of Booth, Deery says:

He was, like many another brilliant man who has been overfond of his glass, one of the most charming of men. I think he was the most fascinating personality I have ever met in my long life. He was as handsome as a young god, with his clear, pale, olive complexion, classically regular features, and hair and mustache literally black as night; but his appearance was not more seductive than his manners. In common intercourse he was utterly devoid of that artificiality and 'staginess' so common to men of his profession. In his ways with his intimates he was as simple and affectionate as a child. John Wilkes Booth cast a spell over most men with whom he came in contact, and I believe all women without exception. At this time he and I boarded together in the same house at Thirteenth and I Streets, and while I was paying my court to our young landlady, Wilkes Booth had won her rather cold younger sister to a state of slavish admiration.

Few men have known John Wilkes Booth better than I have known him, and, despite his terrible crime and deplorable ending, no man have I ever known who possessed a more winning personality. That much at least in his favor can be averred over his grave, dishonored as it is over that of any other American. In liquor, of which he could absorb an astonishing quantity, and still retain the bearing of a gentleman, he would sometimes flash out an angry word, but it was a hard matter to provoke him to a quarrel.

For a period of about ten days before the assassination, he visited my place every day, sometimes in the after-

noons, sometimes in the evenings. At this time he was out of an engagement and drinking quite freely, noticeably so, even for him, I thought. At times he seemed a bit crazed, apparently on account of the frequency of his potations. But there was a deeper cause, as I was to know later. . . .

That Booth was unquestionably laboring under some undue excitement was apparent to me a week before the fatal shot was fired. As I now clearly recall, he seemed to be crazed by some stress of inward feeling, but only one who was very intimate with him could have told it. As I afterwards remarked to friends when speaking of that experience, 'Booth was crazy, but he didn't show it.' Still I had no real conception of the tumult that was working in his breast for, excepting in purely social matters, John Wilkes Booth always kept his own counsel. He never used to gossip about his professional work, nor boast of his stage career as is the general custom of actors. The particular thing that attracted my attention, and what seemed out of the ordinary, was the amazing quantity of liquor he drank in my billiard parlors. (He seemed born to a taste for liquor which he unquestionably inherited from his father, the great Elder Booth, who was a notorious dram-drinker.) He (John Wilkes) would sometimes call for a second glass of brandy and toss it off when he had barely drained the first one. This was far from his usual way, for, while a steady drinker, I had always found Booth to respect the amenities and 'drink square,' as we used to say in those days.

During that last week at Washington he sometimes drank at my bar as much as a quart of brandy in the space of less than two hours of an evening. . . . It was more than a spree, I could see that, and yet Booth was not given to sprees. He was a steady dram-drinker, and sometimes overstepped the bounds and got intoxicated, but he was a sober man the next day.

I believe Booth was as much crazed by the liquor he drank that week as by any motive when he shot Lincoln. I have had but one lifelong wish, and that was that his friends could but have known or guessed his purpose and kept the maddening cup from his hand. But it was a time when nearly everybody drank in Washington, and the majority of those who did drank much more freely than drinking men do now. The Nation had been encouraged to drink, for up to the breaking-out of the war there was no tax on liquor whatever. Excellent whiskey could be had for five cents a glass in hotels and barrooms, and French champagne retailed for two dollars a bottle. I need not recall the list of distinguished men of the war-time who drank to excess.[1]

The moment Booth learned, at midday on April 14th, of the President's intention to be at the play, he determined to slay him and feverishly planned to do so. Except the scene with Payne at the President's last public speech, previously mentioned, there had been no concerted action among the conspirators as to the murder of Lincoln. This is what Booth means by the statement in his diary: 'Until to-day nothing was ever thought of sacrificing to our country's wrongs.' Booth saw in this opportunity his last chance to strike for the South. His crazed mind was in no condition to realize at this time that nothing could be more disastrous to the interests of the South than the blow he intended to deliver. The pity of it all!

With maniacal fury and ingenuity (he had but a

[1] New York *Sunday Telegraph*, May 23, 1909.

few hours in which to arrange his hellish design) he planned, not only for Lincoln's destruction, but for that of Vice-President Johnson, Secretary Seward, and the victorious head of the army, General Grant.

The murder of Lincoln seemed so futile. Richmond had fallen, Lee and his army had surrendered, and the war was practically over when the murder was committed. Where, then, could be the possibility of aiding the South by such a useless sacrifice?

The War of Secession was over for the people of the North. Not so, however, to all the people of the South, more particularly to some of those in authority there. Because of the pressure of the Union forces, Jefferson Davis and General Lee had consulted about the possible necessity of abandoning Richmond. Such a move had been foreseen and, in a measure, discounted. In the event of such an emergency it was understood that Lee and his army should ally themselves with the forces of General Johnston and, giving battle when they dared, retreat doggedly into the mountains of Virginia or Tennessee where guerrilla warfare might be prolonged for years or until some sort of recognition were made of the principle for which the South was fighting. General Lee told Jefferson Davis it could be done, having in mind, no doubt, the retreat Washington contemplated in the event of a prolongation of the American revolutionary struggle against the British.

The likelihood of such strategy on the part of the South was in Grant's mind when he made unprece-

dentedly favorable terms on the surrender of General Lee and his army. Grant refused to accept the sword of the great Confederate general, provided the enemy army with rations, and allowed their cavalry and artillery to take their horses home with them. Lee's grateful remarks on this generosity of a conquering nation were unmistakable. This same fear of an aftermath of guerrilla warfare was also in the mind of General Sherman, when, later, he tried to duplicate the Grant terms to General Johnston and his army. It was not until Johnston had surrendered to Sherman that the war was really over and all fear was dismissed of the struggle being dragged on by sporadic bands of Confederates in mountain fastnesses.

How much of all this Booth understood and appreciated, it is impossible to say. It is probable that he understood and appreciated it all, for like many visionaries he was acutely intelligent, but in his rabidly fanatic mind he enthusiastically believed that it was still possible for him to strike a blow so terrifying that it would in some way bring recognition to the South and perhaps preserve to her the abominable institution of slavery. When brought to bay and shot, Booth, summoning all his strength and with almost his last breath, gasped, 'Tell my mother that I did what I thought was for the best!'

How far away he and many others were in their judgment of the situation is shown by the calmness with which General Sherman and General Johnston, at the crucial point of the matter, discussed it. The

terms of Johnston's surrender were not yet determined upon. Jefferson Davis, whom Johnston consulted, advised against acceptance unless separate statehood were granted the South, showing how much hope and more determination still prevailed in that leader's bosom. Sherman told Johnston of Lincoln's assassination. Johnston, agitated, expressed sympathy. Both soldiers were far too accustomed to the horrors of war to be diverted from the line of duty by the death of an individual, even though that individual might be the commander-in-chief of either army. Johnston knew that the principle for which the North had been contending was now triumphant beyond the power of any one man's death to disturb. Sherman knew it, too, but also he had Grant's fear that absolute peace might be indefinitely postponed. It was difficult to get able-bodied men to enlist. The South was impoverished and the North was groaning under heavy indebtedness. Many people on both sides, sickened with the horrors of fratricidal strife, were crying aloud for peace, absolute peace.

It is somewhat curious that Booth did not include Secretary Stanton in his scheme of 'sacrifice.' Except Lincoln and Grant no man's loss to the Nation would have been more seriously felt than that of Edwin M. Stanton. He literally wore out his heart and soul in the service of the country. Indeed, it was his positive conviction that the country would have gone on poorly without him. It is to be doubted if he was ever wholly convinced that Booth was other than a

tool of Jefferson Davis and the Confederate authorities to murder the entire Federal Cabinet. We now know, of course, that such was not the case. In the matter of the abduction of Lincoln both Booth and John Surratt were fearful that they would be obliged to appeal for funds to the Confederate authorities, and at one stage it was debated among the conspirators whether or not the Confederate Government would not be likely to surrender them to the Federal authorities in case the plan to abduct Lincoln succeeded. The determination to slay Lincoln came to Booth too late for him to have had any consultation with the leaders of the Rebellion. What the results of such a consultation would have been, we know from the attitude taken by the Confederate Government when, from another source, assassination of the Federal heads was once proposed:

August 9, 1863, a soldier in camp near Fredericksburg wrote to the Confederate Secretary of War offering his services for the assassination 'of those persons — or a part of those at least — who fill high places in the North.'

Seddon (Secretary of War) replied that 'duty requires all such schemes for disposing of those in high position at Washington to be discouraged by the Department and to be discarded by you. The laws of war and morality as well as Christian principles and sound policy forbid the use of such means of punishing even the atrocities of the enemy.' [1]

[1] *Official Records*, Ser. IV, Vol. II, pp. 703, 730. Quoted by Rhodes: *History of the United States*, V, 513, 514.

Preparations for the Assassination

Earlier even than August, 1863, Major Walker Taylor, a nephew of Zachary Taylor and a cousin by marriage of Jefferson Davis, proposed to Davis to abduct Lincoln and bring him to Richmond. 'Davis declined to entertain the proposal because of the risk of killing the captive in the event of resistance.' [1]

After the surrender of Richmond, the Confederate Capital, though events moved rapidly, neither side anticipated so swift a termination of the war as came to pass. The sudden and humane determination of Lee no longer wantonly to sacrifice his soldiers in a hopeless struggle precipitated the end. As was said at the time of the sudden collapse of the Confederacy: 'The darned thing didn't even flicker; it just went right out!'

Could Booth have foreseen such an abrupt ending of the Southern effort, he might well have stayed his hand for all the aid it would render. It is recalled in explanation of the terrible deed that in his diary he says: 'Our cause being *almost* lost something decisive and great must be done.' [2]

Stanton was a strong, self-willed man and often intolerant of the President. He would frequently refuse to obey Lincoln's orders. It was only when Lincoln put down his foot and said, 'Mr. Secretary, it has just got to be done!' that the great War Secretary gave way; but Stanton was indefatigable, faithful, and loyal. That was enough for Lincoln. Stanton

[1] Rhodes: *History of the United States*, v, 514.

[2] Italics by the author.

grew to appreciate Lincoln, though he began with the utmost contempt for him. He never got over believing that the extraordinary magnanimity of the President had in it much of weakness. On the other hand, Lincoln, with his rare faculty in the judgment of men, knew Stanton like a well-studied book. Early abuse from Stanton did not prevent his being made Secretary of War. To Judge Hoar, fearful that Stanton might not be reappointed on the President's re-election, Lincoln said: 'Mr. Stanton has excellent qualities and he has his defects. Folks come up here and tell me there are a great many men who have all Stanton's excellent qualities without his defects. All I have to say is, I haven't met 'em; I don't know 'em. I wish I did!' Stanton's impetuous injustice to Sherman is well known. As War Secretary, Stanton had much, of course, to do with the army. Grant thought him timid, too timid, of the safety of the Capital, and said of him that he could not understand that a threat at the Confederate stronghold would relieve a threat of the enemy on Washington. 'The enemy would always have been safe,' declared Grant, 'if Stanton had been in the field.' That Booth did not include Stanton among the Union officials to be struck down was probably because of the fact that Booth was hampered by the absence of conspirators to do the crazy deed he had in his crazy mind. All were willing to conspire for abduction, but only Booth, Payne, and Herold for assassination. Such is the perversity of natures, it is not impossible that Stanton's

pride was hurt on finding that Booth had not also included him among the officials to be slain.

Booth himself would kill the President and General Grant, the giant Payne would dispatch Secretary Seward; and Atzerodt, the German, who had such a long wait at his ferry in lower Maryland for the kidnaped President who never came, was to kill Vice-President Johnson. Atzerodt weakened and refused. It was useless for Booth to revile him and to say that he was so deeply involved that in any event he would be hanged. The German could not bring himself to obey his chief. He convinced himself that he might escape if he did nothing. He did nothing and was hanged.

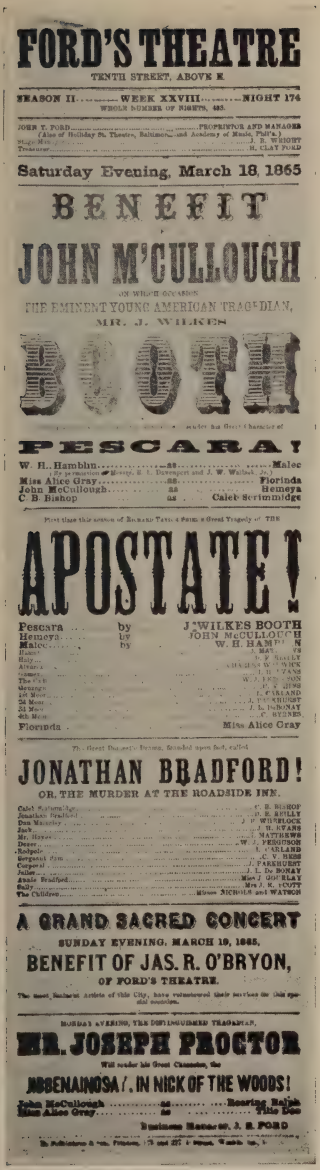
So far as Booth was concerned, everything went precisely as he had planned. Lincoln had two invitations to the theater on April 15, 1865. The one to Grover's Theater, the old National, he transferred to his son 'Tad,' who attended with some boy friends. The other, to Ford's, he accepted for himself. He invited General Grant and his wife and Robert Lincoln. They refused: the Grants because they wished to hasten to their daughter Nellie who was at school in Burlington, New Jersey, and Robert Lincoln because he was eager to get a good night's sleep after weeks of rough campaigning with Grant to whose staff the young captain was attached. Failing these, Major Rathbone and his bride-elect, together with the President and his wife, made up the theater party.

The play of the evening was 'Our American Cousin,'

written by the popular English dramatist, Tom Taylor. Taylor wrote it to fit a Yankee comedian named Josiah Silsby, who was much in favor at the time with the London public. Taylor sold the comedy to the manager, Ben Webster, stipulating that Silsby was to play the chief character, Asa Trenchard. It was the year of the Great Exhibition, 1850–51, at the Crystal Palace in London. Because of their attractive exhibits at the Fair, 'Yankees' were all the rage in London. Taylor thought it a good opportunity for such a play. Webster weakened in his judgment of the play and, failing to produce it, returned it to Taylor, who then made a gift of it to Silsby.

On his return to America the Yankee comedian once put it into rehearsal; but it proved so unpromising that he gave over the idea of playing it. On Silsby's death, Taylor sent the play to America. It came to the attention of Lester Wallack, who recommended it to a fellow manager, Laura Keene, whose 'first low comedian' was Joseph Jefferson. Wallack thought the comedy part in the play suited to Jefferson. Put on as a stop-gap play in order that there might be an increased number of rehearsals of 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream,' then in preparation, 'Our American Cousin' was immediately successful and made name and fame for Laura Keene, Joseph Jefferson, and the elder Sothern.

At first, the outstanding success was Jefferson as Asa Trenchard, the Yankee who lights his cigar with the document the disappearance of which enriches



FORD'S THEATRE

TENTH STREET, ABOVE E.

SEASON II.—WEEK XXVIII.—NIGHT 174

WHOLE NUMBER OF NIGHTS, 483.

JOHN T. FORD, PROPRIETOR AND MANAGER

(Also of Holliday St. Theatre, Baltimore, and Academy of Music, Philad.)

Stage Manager, J. B. WRIGHT

Treasurer, H. CLAY FORD

Saturday Evening, March 18, 1865

BENEFIT

JOHN M'CULLOUGH

ON WHICH OCCASION

THE EMINENT YOUNG AMERICAN TRAGEDIAN,

MR. J. WILKES

BOOTH

Will render his Great Character of

PESCARA!

W. H. Hamblin ..... as ..... Malec

Miss Alice Gray ..... as ..... Florinda

John McCullough ..... as ..... Hemeya

C. B. Bishop ..... as ..... Caleb Scrimmidge

First time this season of Richard Tayl[illegible]'s Great Tragedy of THE

APOSTATE!

Pescara ..... by ..... J. WILKES BOOTH

Hemeya ..... by ..... JOHN McCULLOUGH

Malec ..... by ..... W. H. HAMBLIN

[illegible] ..... [illegible]

Florinda ..... Miss Alice Gray

[illegible]

JONATHAN BRADFORD!

OR, THE MURDER AT THE ROADSIDE INN.

Caleb Scrimmidge ..... C. B. BISHOP

Jonathan Bradford ..... H. E. SOILLY

Dan Marsley ..... J. P. WINDLOCK

Jack [illegible] ..... J. H. EVANS

Mr. Hayes ..... MATHEWS

Deane ..... W. J. PENDLETON

Redpath ..... L. CALLAND

Sergeant Jim ..... C. V. REES

Corporal ..... J. FARNHURST

Julia ..... J. L. De BONAY

Annie Bradford ..... Miss J. GOURLAY

Sally ..... Mrs. J. R. SCOTT

The Children ..... Misses NICHOLS and WATSON

A GRAND SACRED CONCERT

SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 19, 1865.

BENEFIT OF JAS. R. O'BRYON,

OF FORD'S THEATRE.

The most Eminent Artists of this City, have volunteered their services for this special occasion.

MONDAY EVENING, THE DISTINGUISHED TRAGEDIAN,

MR. JOSEPH PROCTOR

Will render his Great Character, the

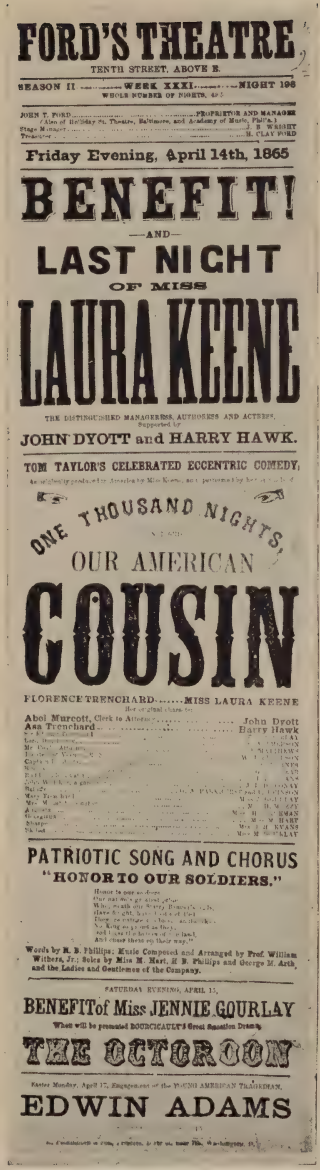
MOSENAINOSA/, IN NICK OF THE WOODS!

John McCullough ..... as ..... Roaring Ralph

Miss Alice Gray ..... as ..... Thia Doe

Business Manager, J. B. FORD

[illegible]



FORD'S THEATRE

TENTH STREET, ABOVE E.

SEASON II.—WEEK XXXI.—NIGHT 198

WHOLE NUMBER OF NIGHTS, 507.

JOHN T. FORD, PROPRIETOR AND MANAGER

(Also of Holliday St. Theatre, Baltimore, and Academy of Music, Philad.)

Stage Manager, J. B. WRIGHT

Treasurer, H. CLAY FORD

Friday Evening, April 14th, 1865

BENEFIT!

—AND—

LAST NIGHT

OF MISS

LAURA KEENE

THE DISTINGUISHED MANAGERESS, AUTHORESS AND ACTRESS,

Supported by

JOHN DYOTT and HARRY HAWK.

TOM TAYLOR'S CELEBRATED ECCENTRIC COMEDY,

ONE THOUSAND NIGHTS,

AT THE

OUR AMERICAN

COUSIN

FLORENCE TRENCHARD ..... MISS LAURA KEENE

Abel Murcott, Clerk to Attorney ..... John Dyott

Asa Trenchard ..... Harry Hawk

[illegible]

PATRIOTIC SONG AND CHORUS

"HONOR TO OUR SOLDIERS."

Words by R. B. Phillips; Music Composed and Arranged by Prof. William Withers, Jr.; Solos by Miss M. Mar, R. B. Phillips and George M. Arch, and the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Company.

SATURDAY EVENING, APRIL 15,

BENEFIT of Miss JENNIE GOURLAY

When will be presented BOUCICAULT'S Great Sensation Drama,

THE OCTOROON

Enter Monday, April 17, Engagement of the YOUNG AMERICAN TRAGEDIAN,

EDWIN ADAMS

[illegible]

PLAYBILLS OF BOOTH'S LAST APPEARANCE IN WASHINGTON AND OF FORD'S THEATRE ON THE NIGHT OF THE ASSASSINATION

instead of himself the English cousin with whom he has fallen in love and whose hand it is doubtful he will ever be able to obtain. The most remarkable success of the play was that of E. A. Sothern as the silly ass Lord Dundreary. Sothern built up a seemingly impossible part to one of superior importance. In his charming 'Autobiography' Jefferson, ever a generous man, makes this splendidly frank acknowledgment: 'Before the first month was over, he [Sothern] stood side by side with any other character in the play: and at the end of the run he was, in my opinion, considerably in advance of us all.'

It was this play, then, with which the public was so delightedly familiar and in which Laura Keene, at the time, was playing a 'star engagement' in Washington, that Lincoln and his party had come to witness on Good Friday night, April 14, 1865.

Through the 'Official Records,' the 'Trial of the Conspirators,' the 'John H. Surratt Trial,' the 'Impeachment Trial of Andrew Johnson,' as well as in the various books on the subject, published soon after and since the period, one is enabled to follow the tragic events, the movements, the speeches and actions of those chiefly concerned in the saddest of all events in the nineteenth century. It was the first successful attempt ever made upon the life of the Chief Executive of the United States.

As late as half-past six o'clock on the evening of the assassination, as the German Atzerodt was eating his dinner in a restaurant, he received a summons from

Booth to report at once at the Herndon House. There Payne had a room. A conference, the last of the three conspirators, was held. None of the other members of the old abduction party but Booth, Payne, and Atzerodt seems to have been present, though Herold could not have been far away. Booth now knew that Grant was not to be at the theater and Payne had been assigned to the murder of Secretary Seward.

How was it possible for Booth to obtain such power over a fellow human being as to command him to perform an act of murder and to know that that command would be enthusiastically obeyed? Who was Lewis Payne and how came he under the influence of Booth? His name was not Payne, but Lewis Thornton Powell, and he was the son of the Reverend George C. Powell, a Baptist minister who in 1859 had moved from Alabama to Florida. At the outbreak of the war the lad Payne (Powell), with his two brothers, had enlisted in the Confederate army. He was at this time but sixteen years old. Along with a majority, if not all, of the Confederate army he was 'the legitimate moral offspring of slavery, States' Rights, chivalry, and delusion.' With his people he believed 'that Northern men were usurping the Government, were coveting their plantations, were longing to pillage their homes, ravage their fields, and reduce them to subjugation.' Securing leave of absence, Payne (Powell) one night went to the theater, the first he had ever attended, in Richmond. He was

fascinated with the play and especially attracted by the voice and acting of one of the players — John Wilkes Booth.

At this time Booth 'was a young man of about twenty-one, with large, lustrous eyes, a graceful form, features classical and regular as a statue, and a rich voice that lingered in the ears of those who heard him.' [1] After the play Payne (Powell), considering himself the equal of any man, sought out Booth and introduced himself. 'Never were two natures thrown together so different, yet so well calculated the one to rule, the other to be ruled. The soldier was tall, awkward, rough, frank, generous, and illiterate. The actor was of delicate mould, polished, graceful, subtle, with a brilliant fancy and an abundant stock of reading. . . . The actor was pleased to have a follower so powerful in his muscles, and Powell was irresistibly drawn to follow a man so wonderfully fascinating and intellectual. . . . They parted not to meet for nearly four years.'

One day in front of Barnum's Hotel in Baltimore, Booth saw Payne passing by. He recognized and hailed him. Payne had been through a fiery ordeal. At Richmond his regiment had joined the army of General Lee and fought all through the Peninsular Campaign, through the battles of Antietam and Chancellorsville. His two brothers had been killed at Murfreesboro, and at Gettysburg he himself had been wounded, taken prisoner, and assigned as a prisoner

[1] *Trial of the Conspirators*, 213.

nurse to a Pennsylvania college hospital. One can imagine the humiliation, the outraged feelings of this fire-eating Confederate set to nursing the enemies of his country — he who had guarded Union prisoners at Richmond and who, in common with many soldier companions, had had his drinking-cup made from the skull of a dead Yankee prisoner.

To Booth, Lincoln was the cause of all the woes of the South, a usurper, a violater of laws, and a creature biding his time to be crowned King of America. To Payne, Lincoln was a devil and Seward was nothing less than the Devil's advocate. It is laughable, then, to say, as has been said, that 'Booth seized with eagerness upon this poor man's [Payne's] hunger to wind about him his accursed toils.' [1] No need for such winding. Payne was already perfectly moulded for Booth's purpose. It is far more reasonable to believe that, after Payne's satisfaction at meeting an affluent friend who shared the same feeling of patriotism for the South as himself, he rejoiced at the prospective opportunity to be avenged on the enemies of his native South and the cause of his great personal misery. 'Remembering his two slaughtered brothers, he was the bitterest Southerner of all those who defied the Government.' Booth knew how to command. Payne knew how to obey. The life of a soldier had taught him that.

Payne, then, was chosen to kill Secretary Seward and Atzerodt to take the life of Andrew Johnson.

[1] *Trial of the Conspirators*, 314.

'I won't do it!' cried the terrified German. 'I enlisted to abduct the President of the United States, not to kill!' Booth reviles Atzerodt and curses him for a coward, but is unable to draw a promise from the German to obey the command to kill. Stung by Booth's verbal assault, Atzerodt wavers, his pride, or such of the commodity as he possessed, causing him to think it over. In the course of the evening he went to the Raleigh Hotel and took a look at Johnson as he sat at dinner with his black man standing at attention behind his chair. One glance at the determined countenance of Andrew Johnson was enough for Atzerodt. He knew that Southerners were finger-quick on the trigger. Then and there all the courage that the conspirator owned oozed out, Acres-like, at the palm of his hands.

How easy it would have been, even at that late hour, for this bit of cowardly stupidity to have saved not only his own life but that of Abraham Lincoln! A word from the German and Booth would have been apprehended. For though Atzerodt would not kill Johnson, the irresolute fool had not sufficient sense to realize what a humane opportunity he had to save Lincoln who was never more needed than at this time to guide the Nation through the maelstrom of Reconstruction. Though Atzerodt would not murder, he did not betray. He took no part in the actual assassination, but he knew what was to be enacted and would not lift a finger to prevent it. For that was he a fool. Cowards are not generally so loyal.

It was remarkable that Booth should have so much reckless confidence in the men to whom he confided his plans for both the plots of abduction and assassination. Not only the actors, Samuel Chester and John Matthews, refused to have anything to do with his schemes, but, as we have seen, Atzerodt balked at the eleventh hour. What kept these recalcitrants from disclosing Booth's plans? In the case of Chester and Matthews, most likely the conclusion that carrying off the President was seemingly the kind of rattle-brained idea that would appeal to the madcap youngster of an eccentric father; that Booth would soon realize his folly and abandon the attempt. Neither seems to have understood that the plan was an obsession that had taken hold of every fiber of the man's being. With Atzerodt it was irresolution and stupidity.

Another proof that Booth's first plan in connection with the President was for abduction only, that 'until to-day nothing was thought of sacrificing,' is pointed out by the statement that he made no effort to enlist the services of Surratt, Arnold, or O'Laughlin in the plan to kill; that those men had voiced strenuous objection to any procedure on their part but abduction, threatening to withdraw when they felt that something more sinister was hinted. However, Payne, who was frustrated in his effort to dispatch Seward, told Colonel Eckert, Stanton's secretary, that 'it was a plan to carry off Lincoln and give him up to the Confederates, but when that failed, Booth,

who was the only one in earnest, proposed to kill Lincoln and all of the Cabinet. The rest backed out and scattered like a lot of beggars. We never heard of Surratt nor of Arnold nor of any of them again. I told Booth I would go in with him, and he preferred to kill Lincoln while I was set upon Seward. I deserve to be killed and so does Booth. The rest were women and babies.'

If Eckert's report of Payne's statement is to be depended upon, it certainly argues a guilty knowledge on the part of Surratt, Arnold, and the others of the plan to murder Lincoln and the determination not to take part. As for Mrs. Surratt's complicity in any plot, except that of carrying off the President to Richmond, of which it seems impossible she could have been wholly unaware, the evidence produced in the trial of the conspirators, and in that of the impeachment of Andrew Johnson, strongly disproves. In any event, it is evident that Mrs. Surratt was not more guilty than O'Laughlin, Arnold, and Dr. Mudd, who were imprisoned and ultimately pardoned by President Andrew Johnson: all except O'Laughlin, who died at Dry Tortugas, to which he, Dr. Mudd, Arnold, and Spangler had been sentenced for imprisonment. 'If she [Mrs. Surratt] did not know of the change of purpose on the part of the conspirators,' said a great Massachusetts lawyer, 'there is no evidence that she knew in any way of the assassination!'

It is somewhat remarkable that those who were officially close to Stanton — that is, those whose posi-

tions depended upon a nod from the Secretary of War — should have procured from the culprits about to be hanged the very admissions of guilt that Stanton longed to hear, admissions corroborating Stanton's attitude and sustaining suspicions which were proved to be groundless.

Stanton's secretary, Colonel Eckert, got a 'confession' from the conspirator Payne implicating John Surratt. Surratt when caught was tried, and went free. Colonel, afterwards General L. C. Baker, Chief of the National Executive Police (Secret Service), got a 'confession' from Mrs. Surratt linking her with Lincoln's assassination. Mrs. Surratt's companions in death were unquestionably guilty — they were caught practically red-handed making denial on their part unnecessary; but Mrs. Surratt's guilt was never more than a guess, and when convicted she received a recommendation to mercy which President Johnson declared he had never seen. This provoked a bitter controversy between Johnson and Judge-Advocate-General Holt.

It seems incredible that a *woman* about whose guilt there was the gravest doubt, should have been despatched almost in Indian haste, as was Mrs. Surratt, who, from her sentence to her death, was given but *twenty-four hours* in which to prepare to meet her God.

Let us listen to Colonel Baker:

> During my visits to the prisoners, before their execution, Mrs. Surratt confessed to me her complicity with the conspirators [he thinks it just as well to point out that the

confession was not made *after* the execution] so far as the intended abduction was concerned, *but affirmed that she reluctantly yielded to the urging of Booth in aiding the plot of assassination.* She insisted that her oath of fidelity bound her to see the fatal end of the conspiracy.[1]

It would be difficult to make a statement that would more readily violate probability or likelihood than that which the writer has printed in italics. That Mrs. Surratt would be sentenced to imprisonment, few doubted, but that she would be hanged, few, if any, for one moment imagined. That even an illegal Military Commission would proceed to the extremity of sending a *woman*, a citizen of Washington, to the gallows without a trial by jury, the civil courts being open and in operation, was not credited. All the assurance of her legal counsel, her friends, and her faithful daughter were of a character to reconcile her to the thought of a prison sentence that might ultimately be commuted, as were the sentences of Dr. Mudd, O'Laughlin, Arnold, and Spangler, than whom she was likely not more guilty and who were later pardoned. A writ of *habeas corpus* had been sued out as a last resource and all concerned were momentarily — almost confidently — expecting a stay of proceedings. General Hancock, in command, delayed the signal for the execution until the last moment. In this situation, then, that Mrs. Surratt, while all those interested in her, were feverishly exerting themselves in her behalf, proclaiming her inno-

[1] Baker: *History of the Secret Service*, 563.

cence of any knowledge of the assassination, should confess to anybody, especially to the Chief of the Secret Service, that she was a party to the assassination is, on the face of it, incredible. If she were guilty and conscience-stricken, such a confession might be made to her daughter, her counsel, or her religious adviser, yes, but in the circumstances, to the Chief of the Secret Service, as being worthier her confidence, never! And this alleged confidence which Baker received seems to have been respected by him until too late for contradiction, and until the publication of his book. It is of such stuff fables are made!

In this connection it is extremely interesting to note the minority report of the judiciary committee of the House of Representatives on the Johnson Impeachment Trial. That report read: 'Although examined on oath, time and again, and on various occasions, it is doubtful whether he [Baker] has in any one thing told the truth even by accident. . . . And we are glad to know that no one member of the committee deems any statement made by him as worthy the slightest credit.' [1]

Efforts have been made at various times to establish the fact of an illicit relation between Mrs. Surratt and Booth. As late as 1928, Mrs. Surratt is depicted as being 'fascinated, probably to the point of romantic love, by Booth's matinée-idol manner.' [2]

[1] *Impeachment Investigation*, Reports, p. iii. Quoted by David Miller De Witt: *Assassination of Lincoln*, 99.

[2] Lloyd Lewis: 'The Four were Hanged,' *Liberty*, February 11, 1928.

To the writer this seems highly improbable — another of the fictions that have sprung up in this fateful history. Booth was attracted to young and beautiful women and unquestionably they to him, and there is ample evidence that he wrought sad havoc with their all-too susceptible hearts. At the time of Booth's association with the Surratt household, Mrs. Surratt was a woman of forty-five. Booth was but twenty-six. He had little need and less inclination to invite or accept romantic intimacy with middle-aged mothers who nodded o' evenings by the piano, in the parlor.

The fact would appear to be that, if any heart in the Surratt household fluttered at the approach of John Wilkes Booth, it was not Mrs. Surratt's, and that the inference of her amorous association with a man whose mother she might have been is a sadly unjust one.

On February 6, 1865, writing from Washington to his cousin, Miss Belle Seaman, who resided in New York, John Surratt, among other things, said:[1]

> . . . I have just taken a peep into the parlor. Would you like to know what I saw there? Well, ma was sitting on the sofa, nodding first to one chair and then to another, next the piano. Anna is sitting in a corner, dreaming, I expect, of J. W. Booth. Well, who is J. W. Booth? *She* can answer the question. But hark! The doorbell rings and Mr. J. W. Booth is announced. And listen to the scamperings. Such brushing and fixing.[2]

[1] Baker: *History of the Secret Service*, 562–63.

[2] A Miss Dean and a Miss Fitzpatrick were also present.

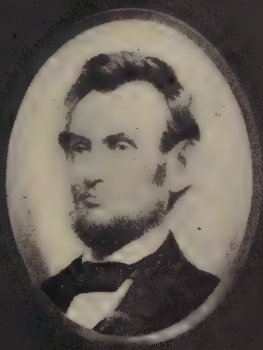
Even the man, Louis J. Weichman, whose testimony hanged her, gave Mrs. Surratt an exemplary character as a fine woman and a faithful church attendant.

There were two persons who knew positively of Mrs. Surratt's innocence of complicity in Lincoln's assassination, the Government clerk, Louis J. Weichman, young Surratt's former college companion, who boarded with the Surratts, and John Wilkes Booth. Weichman was intimidated by Government officials into falsifying the truth, and Booth was dead. Had Booth been alive at the time of the trial of the conspirators — and it has been absurdly claimed that he was — such was his chivalric attitude toward women, especially Southern women, nothing would have stopped him from coming forward to proclaim the innocence of Mary E. Surratt. It is but fair to state that on his death-bed, Weichman, calling for pen and paper, reaffirmed the truth of the testimony he had given at the 'Trial of the Conspirators,' and signed his name.

Booth directed Payne to join him, as soon as he had disposed of Seward, at the Anacostia Bridge across the Potomac and on the way to lower Maryland, the direction in which it was intended to effect escape. Herold would wait at the door of Seward's house and guide Payne over the proper roads of which Payne knew nothing.

Lincoln and his party were a little late in arriving at the theater. The play was already under way. As the President and his guests entered, 'Florence Trenchard,' played by Laura Keene, was trying to

Allow Mrs Lincoln
& friends to come in
at 9 - A.M. to-mor
row -
A. Lincoln
April 14. 1865



The above is the last autograph of
President Lincoln. It was written
& given to me at half past 8. P.M.
April 14. 1865. just as he & Mrs Lin
coln were starting for the Theatre
where he was assassinated.

F.D. Ackerman

May 1. 1865.

explain a joke to the literalist nobleman, 'Lord Dundreary,' assumed by E. A. Emerson. 'Dundreary' declared he could not see the joke. At this point the President entered his box. Seeing the President, Miss Keene looked toward the box and, interpolating, said, 'Well, anybody can see *that!*' [1] It has been repeatedly said that the orchestra struck up 'Hail to the Chief,' that the audience cheered and cheered again, and for several moments the play was at a standstill, while Lincoln smiled and bowed his appreciation of the ovation accorded him. All of which is declared to be a fable by an actor who was on the stage at the time, and who heard no 'Hail to the Chief,' nor any 'cheers' — nothing but 'a ripple of hand-clapping,' to which Lincoln came forward and bowed.

Except, perhaps, at the beginning of his administration, this advancing to the edge of the box to acknowledge the plaudits of the audience was a new experience to Lincoln in Washington, where, until victory came, he was ominously unpopular. Lincoln loved the theater and was frequent in his attendance. W. J. Ferguson, call-boy and actor at Ford's Theater on the night of the great crime, tells us [2] that audiences took little or no notice of the coming and going of the Chief Executive of the Nation.

The slight of individuals and the indifference of Washington audiences caused Mrs. Lincoln to say to the President: 'We have no friends here!'

[1] Laughlin: *The Death of Lincoln.*

[2] *Saturday Evening Post*, February 12, 1927.

CHAPTER X

THE ASSASSINATION

Booth was as confident as any fanatic can be, which is the supremacy of confidence, that he was justified in removing the various heads of the Federal Government. On the grievous day of April 14, 1865, he went to the office of Grover's Theater, Washington, and took great pains to write out that justification. He intended that it should be published in the *National Intelligencer* the next morning. When it did not appear, Booth, in his diary, said bitterly, 'The little, the very little I have left to clear my name, the Government will not allow to be printed.' The Government knew nothing about it. In fact, for days the Government did not know, but merely suspected, that Booth was the man who had shot the President. Booth used no disguise whatever nor intended there should be any secrecy as to the author of the awful crime. He did not regard himself as a 'common cutthroat' eager to cover up his identity, but as a patriot avenging the wrongs of his country — a Tell or a Brutus.

His justification never reached its intended destination, and this is why: Booth was about to mail it when he met John Matthews, a fellow actor, on Pennsylvania Avenue, as has been recounted. He gave the paper to Matthews, requesting him to de-

liver it personally in the morning to the *Intelligencer*. That justification disclosed Booth's identity and was signed with his name. In the excitement of that dreadful night, Matthews forgot all about the document until it recalled itself to his attention by dropping out of his coat pocket as he took off his clothes on going to bed. Matthews broke the seal and read the letter. Finding it to be a declaration of Booth's intentions, an attempt at justification for what he was about to do, and, fearing the possible consequences of such a letter being found in his possession, after several perusals he burned the dire thing. He was not summoned to testify at the trial of the conspirators, but at the Surratt trial he stated that though he could not recall all of Booth's letter he was certain as to the closing paragraph which read:

> The moment has at length arrived when my plans must be changed. [Showing a previous plan — abduction, so often denied.] The world may censure me for what I am about to do, but I am sure that posterity will justify me.
> John Wilkes Booth — Payne — Atzerodt, and Herold.

It is evident from this that Booth did not wholly give over his determination to kidnap the President until the last moment when, seized by that 'access of madness' because of the unfavorable turn in the fate of the South, he felt impelled to slay him.

Having learned that the President was to occupy a box at Ford's Theater and not at Grover's Theater, Booth, with everything in readiness, even to a vindicatory statement of his intentions, arrived at the

theater on the fatal night between nine and ten o'clock. He got his horse from the stable-shed, which was but a few yards away, and brought the animal up to the stage entrance. At the time there was no one in attendance at the stage door, which was sometimes guarded by 'Peanut John' (Joseph Burroughs). 'Peanut John' was now inside attending to his tasks behind the scenes. It was also his business to make himself generally useful in the theater's interest. In daytime he peddled bills for the theater and, when 'Ned' Spangler, the assistant stage carpenter, was not around, he fed and cleaned Booth's horses which were kept in the aforementioned shed which had been altered for Booth by Spangler. Spangler was an ardent sympathizer with the Confederate cause and probably knew of Booth's plan to kidnap, but not likely of his plan to kill the President.

To further his scheme of abduction, Booth practically made his home in Washington. When there, he lived at the National Hotel, on Pennsylvania Avenue. John T. Ford, who leased and managed theaters in Washington and Baltimore, lived in the latter city. It was his custom to come from Baltimore periodically in the interest of his Washington theater. 'Booth,' he tells us, 'who was a peculiarly fascinating man, frequented Ford's Theater. . . . I seldom visited the theater but that I found him about or near it during the day while I was there. . . . He had his letters directed to the theater, and that was the cause of his frequent visits there, as I thought at the time.'

It was under Ford's management that Booth became a 'star.'

Nobody seemed to think it strange that Booth, whose home city was Baltimore, where his mother resided, should be constantly in Washington, riding horseback about the city, making trips into Charles County, pretending to be interested in the purchase of land, but in reality acquainting himself with roads over which it was intended to take the President, and perhaps other Government officials, whom he proposed to abduct. Why should anybody be suspicious of him? He was the last man to be suspected of anything except great ambition to excel in his profession, and Washington was a gay city, the very center of a civil war now at its height. Everybody and his sister seemed to be in Washington; why not the debonair John Wilkes Booth?

He was on terms of intimacy with those connected with Ford's Theater. People were attracted to him because of his affability, his handsome person, and the fact that he was the gifted, successful, and quite unpretentious son of the great tragedian Junius Brutus Booth and brother to the brilliant Edwin Booth, America's ideal representative of Hamlet.

In the play of 'Our American Cousin' there is a small part of a gardener. On the night of the assassination it was to be played by J. L. Debonay. Debonay stood at the stage door in the rear of the theater when Booth arrived there. Booth asked Debonay if he would kindly call Spangler. He wanted

him to hold his horse. One gets an idea of the intimacy Booth had with the theater people and of his power to command when one finds him exacting the services of stage hands during the busy time of a performance. But Spangler was an old friend of the Booth family, having rebuilt Tudor Hall, the Booth country home. As Spangler and 'Peanut John' were arranging the box that afternoon for the coming of the President, Spangler had been incautious enough to damn the President.

'What do you want to damn him for?' demanded 'Peanut John.' 'He never did anything to you!'

'Aw, he ought to be shot,' Spangler replied, 'for getting all those men killed in the war.' Which at the trial was quite properly considered a significant remark.

Debonay carried Booth's message to Spangler and Spangler left his post and went into the alley to hold Booth's horse. Realizing that something might easily go wrong with the scene-shifting as the result of his absence, Spangler deputed 'Peanut John' to hold the animal, saying he would be responsible for John's absence.

Booth then inquired of Debonay if it were possible to cross the stage at the back. Debonay informed him that it was not possible, as the 'Dairy Scene,' which required the full depth of the stage, was being played. In order to get to the other side of the stage, Booth and Debonay went downstairs under the stage, where they parted.

The Assassination

With his derringer in his pocket and his long dagger within easy reach, what must have been the state of mind of John Wilkes Booth as he walked under the stage with his fellow player? Not far above him, sitting in a box, was the gentlest, most tactful man in the world, whose greatest care had always been to spare other people pain and sorrow, one who, happy at the outcome of a gigantic struggle to preserve the union of his country, was basking in the long-delayed joy of accomplishment and the love and appreciation of a grateful people. When success was doubtful to either contender in the war, Booth sought to abduct this man and hold him as a ransom for peace; but now the principals of the cause Booth espoused have surrendered and the cause itself is lost beyond the possibility of resurrection. Why won't he understand this? Why will he not awaken to the realization that the awful 'sacrifice' toward which he is rushing is wildly, hopelessly futile? Why will not some Great Power brush away the mist that clouds this man's brain before it is too late? Will no thought come to him of the grief and sorrow his contemplated act will cause, not only himself and his family, but the whole world? Can nothing stay his hand? Will he be lost to all thought of everything except doing, as he said, 'that which Brutus was honored for, and that which made Tell a hero'? Will he not remember his eldest brother Junius, to whom he is indebted for so much wise counsel and example, or his brother Edwin, of whom he is so proud and who has but newly risen to

the enjoyment of richly deserved fame? Will he not recall his gloriously beautiful sister Asia, and if these are not enough to halt him in his madness, will not the memory of his adored mother be enough to restore the balance of his mind, that mother who had suffered so patiently under the trials of her greatly gifted but eccentric husband? Will not all these be sufficient to divert him from his mad course? Alas, no! Fanaticism hearkens only to its own counsel, which it believes to be inspired.

Once at the front of the theater, Booth is playful with the doorkeeper, Joseph Buckingham.

'You'll not want a ticket from *me?*' he says in the winningest way, knowing full well that it is the last thing 'Buck' would think of demanding. Booth inquires the time and is directed by the doorkeeper to the clock in the lobby. He condescends to borrow a 'chew' of tobacco of 'Buck' — most gentlemen, especially Southern gentlemen of that day, partook of the weed. Buckingham presents him to some friends, so proud is he to have it known that he is on terms of familiarity with the brilliant young player.

Booth's object in inquiring the hour was to enable him to time his deed with that of Payne's 'sacrifice' at the home of Secretary Seward, that the escape and meeting at the Anacostia Bridge should coincide as nearly as possible. Fortifying himself with liquor at an adjoining tavern, Booth once more, and for the last time, passes Buckingham at the theater's entrance and ascends the stairs to the balcony which is

on the same level with the box in which the President and his party are seated. Booth leans against the theater's wall and surveys the scene in front of him. Before it is possible for him to carry out his horrible plan, it is necessary for him to get into the President's box. Surely that is going to be impossible. There is, of course, a guard, perhaps several, in front of, about, or within the box, put there by those in authority to protect the Chief Magistrate of the country against just such horrible intentions as Booth has in mind. Would to God there had been!

John T. Ford testified that 'Booth was a very bold and fearless man,' the truth of which was never more promptly attested than at this particular juncture. Booth has no doubt but that he will be able to carry all before him. He was accustomed to have people do as he wished. Evidently he was a most persuasive man. He is confident that he can march down to those guards, show his card, smile graciously, and the guards, without protest, will admit him to the presence of the President to work his fanatic will. Booth advances boldly. *There is no guard!* Nobody to stop his entrance to the President's box. There was *a* guard, but he, lulled to a sense of the President's security by the fact of the practical ending of the war, is seated beyond the box and is deep in the enjoyment of the play as well as the President and the rest of the audience.[1]

[1] The Chief of Police assigned one John Parker to guard the President's box on the night of the assassination. The day following, Parker

Once inside the passageway, Booth acts swiftly. He quickly bars the door securely from all intrusion and, making sure by peeping through a hole cut previously that all is as he wishes, he enters the box, closes in upon the President, cries 'Sic semper tyrannis' (the motto of Virginia), and fires a bullet into Lincoln's brain. The great war President, the mighty man of the age, sinks almost imperceptibly into unconsciousness from which he never recovers. Now, indeed, all his cares, all his vast responsibilities, all his troubles are at an end.

Booth instantly drops his derringer and draws a villainous-looking, broad-bladed dagger, and, as Major Rathbone leaps to seize him, stabs at his breast. Rathbone wards off the blow with his arm which is dangerously slashed. Mounting the rail of the box, Booth leaps toward the stage, some ten or fifteen feet below, not a dangerous leap for a man like Booth, who had a reputation for being much of a gymnast. But here he had the first mishap in his mad scheme to kill the President in a crowded theater with no other means of exit from the immediate scene of the crime than a high leap, before an audience, to the stage below. One of the spurs of his riding-boot caught in the flag which draped the box and so diverted the angle of his leap that he alighted with one leg under him in such a way as to break a bone of his

confessed to another guard, William H. Crook, not on duty, that he went to a seat in the front gallery to see the play. (See Crook's published statement.)

BOOTH LEAPING TO THE STAGE AFTER THE ASSASSINATION AND CATCHING HIS SPUR IN THE FLAG

From a cut in *Frank Leslie's Weekly* of May 6, 1865

left leg, the fibula, about two inches above the ankle. He was quickly on his feet, dagger in hand, and dashed across the stage, greatly to the astonishment of Harry Hawk, who, playing Joseph Jefferson's original part of 'Asa Trenchard,' was the only one on the stage when the shot was fired.[1]

The audience made no move, thinking the shot and even the appearance of Booth, whom nobody in the audience clearly recognized, a part of the play. John Matthews, playing the part of 'Mr. Coyle, an attorney,' waiting behind the undrawn 'flats' to be 'discovered,' thought the shot something new interpolated to frighten the butt of the comedy, 'Lord Dundreary.' It was not until Booth had disappeared from the stage, the play had halted, and a thin coil of smoke wreathed its way out of the President's box over the auditorium, together with Mrs. Lincoln's incoherent appeal to the audience, that it awoke to the realization that it was in the presence of an irreparable tragedy.

Laura Keene and William J. Ferguson, the 'Lieutenant Vernon, R.N.,' of the play, were standing, at the time, in the first entrance, awaiting their turn to reappear upon the scene. Suddenly Booth appears before them, dashes between them and on toward the

[1] Speaking of his leap from the box to the stage, Booth said to Thomas Harbin, in Virginia, that if he had not been a very courageous man, he would have given up and have been taken right there, as he for an instant seemed about to faint. Harbin was Thomas A. Jones's brother-in-law. (Ella V. Mahoney: *Sketches of Tudor Hall and the Booth Family*, 34.)

rear of the stage, striking with his dagger at William Withers, Jr., the leader of the orchestra, who is in his line of flight (so that gentleman declares and Ferguson denies), and, passing swiftly into the alley in the rear of the theater, mounts his horse which is being held by 'Peanut John,' who later said (there being no one to contradict him) that Booth kicked him out of the way. And now he is speeding on his way to the Navy Yard bridge and freedom, unpursued. Ferguson states that, 'in all, possibly a minute had passed between the time of the pistol report and the moment when Booth rode out of sight.' The dagger Booth grasped was not alone for clearing his way. It was to be used upon himself in the event of his being captured in the effort to escape, for, as he himself declared, it was never his intention to be taken alive.

Secretary Stanton, on learning of Lincoln's assassination, said that, if one of the many thousand soldiers the President commanded had been on guard at the President's box, Lincoln would have been saved. Stanton, who was forever warning Lincoln of the danger he incurred in going about unprotected, might easily have had such a guard at Ford's Theater that night. The very day of the crime, when Lincoln apprised Stanton of the intention of going to the theater in the evening, Stanton was especially remonstrative. When the President, to placate Stanton, laughingly expressed his willingness to take as protector Colonel Eckert, Stanton's handsome, athletic

assistant, to the amusement of Lincoln the Secretary of War declared he was too busy to think of sparing Colonel Eckert. So even Stanton's apprehensions had somewhat abated.

The Secret Service arm of the Government, upon which Stanton so feverishly called after the assassination, could not have been better employed than in guarding the head of the Nation against the possibility of what ultimately happened. If such had been the case, there might well have been no assassin to pursue.

Thus passed from life to death the greatest, the most remarkable figure of the American Civil War, 'the first American,' Lowell called him, whom none of his contemporaries feared and few respected. He was only just coming into the reward of affectionate appreciation when overtaken by the hand of death.

The detraction, the abuse meted out to Lincoln during his administration was not confined to his own country, as may be seen by the following from the London *Star*, April 17, 1865, twelve days after the President's death. The manliness of the admission made by the *Star* is of a kind with that of the London *Punch* after years of vilification. The *Star* wrote:

> We in England have something to be ashamed of when we meditate upon the greatness of the man so ruthlessly slain. Too many Englishmen lent themselves to the vulgar and ignoble cry raised against him.... They sneered at his manners, as if Cromwell were a Chesterfield. They accused him of ugliness, as if Mirabeau were a beauty.

They made coarse pleasantry of his figure, as if Peel were a posture master. They were facetious about his dress, as if Cavour were a D'Orsay. They were indignant about his jokes, as if Palmerston never joked. . . .

We do not remember any instance since the wildest days of British fury against the 'Corsican Ogre' in which a foreign statesman was ever so dealt with in English writings as Mr. Lincoln. And Napoleon was our enemy. Mr. Lincoln was our steadfast friend. Assailed by the coarsest attacks on this side of the ocean, he never did a deed, never wrote or spoke a word which was unjust or unfriendly to the British nation.

'The uncouthness and oddity of the man,' says the historian Rhodes, 'have gone with him to the grave. His speeches, state papers, letters, records of his conversation, and some of his stories remain. Indeed, the roughness of his manners was an incident so trivial that we forget it naturally without making an effort to ignore it. We can see into the very soul of Lincoln and know him as he knew himself. Let everything be told about him, and we shall never respect him less, but shall always love him more.'

CHAPTER XI

THE ESCAPE

Sergeant Silas T. Cobb kept the bridge at the Washington Navy Yard. About eleven o'clock on the night of the assassination he stopped Booth and Herold in their flight from an outraged populace. But Sergeant Cobb knew nothing of the guilt of the men he was halting nor anything of the outraged populace in the city behind them. Had he known he would have become one of two things: a much richer man because of the rewards which would have come to him for the capture of Booth and Herold, if he *had* captured them, or a dead man because Booth was in no frame of mind to be trifled with.

Booth came thundering toward the sentry and was challenged. Sergeant Cobb advanced to see if he were a proper person to pass. He was not, but Cobb was ignorant of that fact. Passage over the bridge was easier now since hostilities had ceased. Lincoln himself had said that people might now pass over as before hostilities. Still Sergeant Cobb kept up a slight show of war-time formality.

Booth rode an undersized horse, a bright bay with shining skin, and as he came abreast of Cobb it looked 'as if he had just had a short burst, a short push,' as the Sergeant declared. 'He seemed restive and uneasy,' continued the soldier gate-keeper, 'much

more so than the rider.' Booth evidently had his muscles under perfect control.

'Who are you?' asked Sergeant Cobb.

'My name is Booth,' was the reply. No attempt at concealment! Of course his name was Booth, but how dare he confess it? But he who had just brazened a multitude of people after striking down the most important man in the Nation, what could he fear from a mere sentry and his sergeant?

'Where are you going?'

'Home.'

'Where is your home?'

'In Charles.' By which, of course, the sergeant understood Booth to mean Charles County.

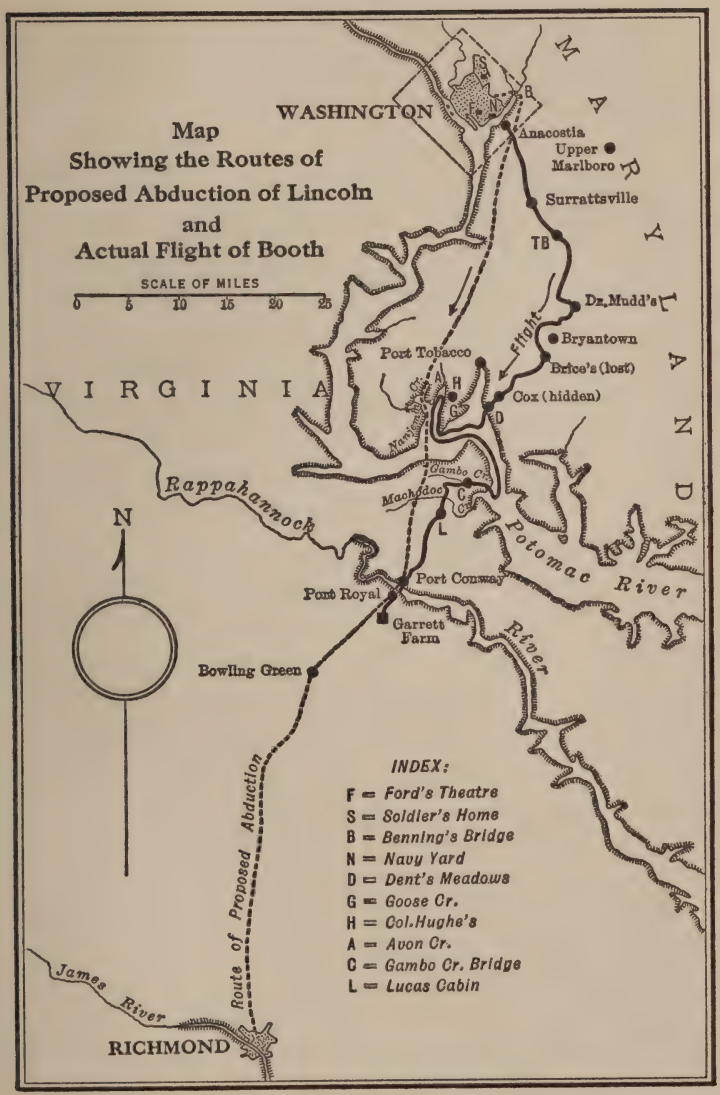
'Why are you out so late?'

Which, in the circumstances, was nothing if not a leading question to which Cobb was certainly not to receive a truthful reply. It would not be unlike Booth, in his frame of mind, to say why and dash on, taking the chance of the sentry missing aim. The attempt to detain him forcibly would have been a different thing.

'Don't you know the rule that persons are not allowed to pass after nine o'clock?'

'That's new to me,' Booth replied. 'I had somewhere to go in the city [Washington] and thought I'd have the moon to ride home by, but the night is dark.'

Dark, indeed. Not only the darkest night in the life of the horseman, but one of the blackest in the


Map
Showing the Routes of
Proposed Abduction of Lincoln
and
Actual Flight of Booth
SCALE OF MILES
0 5 10 15 20 25
WASHINGTON
MARYLAND
VIRGINIA
Anacostia
Upper Marlboro
Surrattsville
TB
Dr. Mudd's
Bryantown
Brice's (lost)
Cox (hidden)
Port Tobacco
Flight
Rappahannock
Machodoc
Gambo Cr.
Potomac River
Port Conway
Port Royal
Garrett Farm
Bowling Green
Route of Proposed Abduction
James River
RICHMOND
N
INDEX:
F = Ford's Theatre
S = Soldier's Home
B = Benning's Bridge
N = Navy Yard
D = Dent's Meadows
G = Goose Cr.
H = Col. Hughe's
A = Avon Cr.
C = Gambo Cr. Bridge
L = Lucas Cabin

history of the Nation. But Booth had no thought except that it was a wonderful night and that he was on his way to be brilliantly hailed as a hero, to be acclaimed as the savior of a people.

'The moon rose that night about that time,' said Sergeant Cobb in his testimony, 'and I thought him a proper person to pass, so I passed him.' . . . Passed him on to brief freedom, to a heart-breaking revulsion of feeling, on to disgrace, on to death.

A few minutes later the sentry challenged another horseman galloping, though not so swiftly, in the same direction as the first.

'Who are you, and where are you going?' interrogated Sergeant Cobb.

'My name is Smith and I am going home.'

'Why are you out so late?'

To which, as Sergeant Cobb testified, 'Smith' made a very indelicate reply in stating that he had been in bad company. 'I brought him before the guard-house so that the light would shine full in his face and on his horse,' said the sergeant, 'and after his explanation, I let him go.' The man who made use 'of a rather indelicate explanation' was David Herold, the clown in the tragedy which had been enacted that night. Thought not to be so hardy in texture as the other conspirators and not to be able to ride and shoot if necessary, Herold became the factotum, the errand boy of the party. Booth trusted him. Payne did not. He called him 'a blab.' He had conducted Payne to the Seward residence, where

Payne, after shattering his pistol over the head of the Secretary's son Frederick, manhandling another son and severely beating a brave male nurse, repeatedly stabbed Seward in the face and neck. A steel frame worn by the Secretary because of a fractured collar bone was the means of saving his life.

A cry of 'Murder!' from a servant on the Seward threshold so frightened the waiting Herold that he deserted Payne and made for the Navy Yard bridge and — Booth. Like Booth, Payne made good his escape, but without a guide did not know where to turn. He finally abandoned his horse and wandered aimlessly for three days in the outskirts of Washington. Then, driven by hunger, he stupidly went to Mrs. Surratt's. Unfortunately for Payne, a file of soldiers was there at the moment and they arrested him. Had he kept away from Mrs. Surratt's, he might never have been arrested. His presence in Washington had been so well guarded by Booth that few people knew anything about him. It was John Surratt who was credited with the assault on Seward and for whom a reward of $25,000 was offered.

Payne, when questioned by those who were making an examination as to his sanity, declared that in war one killed his enemy wherever he found him. He expressed no regret and seemed indifferent as to his fate. Of all the conspirators in the abduction plot, he said Booth alone was serious. He also thought he and Booth deserved death.[1]

[1] One of the first, if not the first, clues the Government received as to

Still a third horseman, John Fletcher, was challenged that night on the Navy Yard bridge which leads to Anacostia. Fletcher was in pursuit of Herold, who had hired a horse from him. Fletcher was uneasy about that horse. He was afraid he would never see it again. He never did. He had caught sight of Herold in Washington on the horse long after Herold had promised to return it. Herold fled. Fletcher gave chase, but, having first to secure a mount, was outdistanced.

'The third horseman,' said Sergeant Cobb, 'made inquiry after a roan horse — a man passing on a roan horse. He made no inquiries after the other horseman who had passed first.' Of course not. He knew nothing about him nor about his association with Herold. He had not yet heard of the assassination. 'He did not seem to have any business on the other side of the bridge that I considered of sufficient importance to pass him, so I turned him back,'[1] said Sergeant Cobb.[2]

the identity of the conspirators and, in consequence, the direction taken by Booth after the assassination, came from a colored woman named Susan Mahoney, who was a servant at Mrs. Surratt's. The night after the deed, by feigning sleep, she overheard disclosures and witnessed transactions at Mrs. Surratt's house showing that the inmates of and visitors to that house were connected with the assassination. She told her aunt, Mary Ann Griffin, who told her employer, John H. Kimball. He informed General Augur, who sent a file of soldiers to take possession of the Surratt house. The soldiers happened to be there at the moment the would-be assassin of Secretary Seward arrived.

[1] *Official Records*, 39th Congress, 1st Session.

[2] All this is quite consonant with Sergeant Cobb's daily duty at the bridge. Here is no evidence that Cobb was in collusion to let Booth

Booth pushed on to Anacostia and awaited Payne and Herold, as agreed upon. Presently he heard the oncoming of horses' hoofs, but whether of friend or foe he could not be certain. He made ready for either. One thing was certain, friend or foe, there was but one. If friend, Booth knew it must be Herold, for Payne knew nothing of the proposed route into lower Maryland and Virginia. The horseman halted and looked about as if in quest of some one. It was Herold. Payne would have been much more welcome. What had happened? Booth surmised that Payne had failed and had been captured. Had Atzerodt also failed? Booth must have felt something of increased exultation that he alone, probably, of all the conspirators had succeeded in striking a great blow against abolition oppression. Herold soon apprised him of the exact situation.

If Booth blamed Herold for not waiting longer for Payne, he blamed unjustly, for Herold, with little qualification at all as a bravo, except the boyish desire to be associated with anything exciting, stood by for Seward's assailant as long as any other conspirator with even superior intelligence would have tarried. Notwithstanding Dr. McKim's estimate of

and Herold pass while restraining Fletcher, as is absurdly stated in other books on the subject. It is specifically so stated in *The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, by Finis L. Bates, who, through a 'confession' of one John St. Helen, who claimed to be Booth and who also claimed to have escaped punishment at the hands of the Government, dares to charge Andrew Johnson with instigating the murder of Abraham Lincoln and facilitating Booth's escape!

Herold — 'a man of twenty-two with the brain of a boy thirteen' — Herold acquitted himself valorously. True, he ran, but it was time to run. That boy brain had acted acutely in a great emergency, and he had met Booth, as agreed, at Anacostia. After what Booth had passed through and his lonely ride, the sight of any friend must have been a welcome one.

Together the two conspirators rode into Surrattsville at midnight. Booth did not dismount. He was too lame and the lameness was growing worse. Dismounting and remounting in his condition would be painful and would take time, and there was none to spare. Wasted moments might spell capture, and capture meant being robbed of the heroic welcome, the wild acclaim confidently expected on reaching Virginia and those for whom the great 'sacrifice' had been made. Poor John Wilkes Booth, disillusionment, though not far off, had not yet come to him!

Leaving Booth on his horse in front of the little hotel owned by Mrs. Surratt and now rented to John M. Lloyd, Herold burst in upon Lloyd with: 'Lloyd, for God's sake, make haste and get those things!'

Lloyd knew what was meant and, without a word, went and got a carbine (there were two carbines, but he brought only one), ammunition, a field glass, and a bottle of whiskey. The field glass had been left that very day by Mrs. Surratt by Booth's request. With a monkey wrench and a coil of rope, the carbines had been brought to Lloyd by John Surratt about six weeks before the assassination. At that time, only

the conspiracy of abduction was active, as the coil of rope indicates. The wrench was to be used as needed on the carriage, or carriages, in which it was hoped to abduct the President or any of his Cabinet.

As Mrs. Surratt was about to leave for Surrattsville, on the afternoon of the assassination, Booth came upon her at her door and requested her to take the field glasses to Lloyd. It was proved that she did not make the journey especially to deliver the glasses, but went on business in connection with her property. She nearly forgot Booth's request. Had she done so entirely, it is not unlikely she would not have been hanged.

Eager, naturally, to get as far away as possible from Washington and into territory of supposedly sympathetic Southerners, Booth and Herold spent but five minutes at Surrattsville. In front of the hotel porch they drank some of the whiskey from the bottle as they sat upon their horses. Booth refused a carbine. It was too much of a load for a man with a broken leg.

'I'll tell you some news, if you want to hear it,' said Booth to Lloyd as the two fugitives were about to continue their journey south. 'I am pretty certain we have assassinated the President and Secretary Seward.' Booth, knowing he was speaking to a man sympathetic with the South, no doubt made the remark, unable longer to deny himself the enjoyment of a word of appreciation from a Southerner, from one of the people for whom the deed was committed.

Not too much reliance is to be placed in Lloyd's statement. He was befuddled with drink when the horsemen arrived at the inn. In testifying he said:

'I was right smart in liquor that afternoon, and after night I got more so.'

Booth did not speak of the deed he had committed as assassination. He preferred the more euphonious term of 'sacrifice.'

On into the night feverishly rode the two conspirators until Booth's endurance was taxed to its uttermost. With 'the bone tearing through the flesh' of his leg, he could stand no more without some relief from pain. At last they veered somewhat from their intended course and made for the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd, who lived about three miles from Beantown. They arrived there about five o'clock Saturday morning, 'just as day was breaking.' Dr. Mudd was obliged to cut the boot from Booth's injured leg, the left, and set the bone. For this Booth paid him twenty-five dollars. The physician also made crutches for the patient. Later, Herold came downstairs and borrowed a razor with which Booth shaved off his mustache.

CHAPTER XII

LOOKING BACK

As Booth fled over the Navy Yard bridge to the rendezvous with Payne and Herold at Anacostia, could he have looked back at Washington and seen the sorrow and the horror his atrocious act had caused, even his fanatical mind must have misgiven him.

So fiendishly exact had been his calculation of the time it would take the audience to awaken from its amazed stupor to a realizing sense of the situation, that just about the moment after Booth had dashed through the stage door of the theater, gained his seat in the saddle, and was gone, the audience came to its senses and pandemonium reigned. Useless the cry, 'Kill him! Kill him!' Idiotic the yell, 'Burn the theater! Burn the theater!' As if the inanimate walls were in any way responsible. The deed was done, the assassin escaped.

Then came the pitiful cry of a woman — Mrs. Lincoln, appealing incoherently to the audience. Helen Trueman, the Augusta that night in the cast playing 'Our American Cousin,' says: 'Mrs. Lincoln's scream turned the house into an inferno of noise. There will never be anything like it on earth. The shouts, groans, curses, smashing of seats, screams of women, shuffling of feet, cries of terror created a

LAURA KEENE AS FLORENCE TRENCHARD IN
'OUR AMERICAN COUSIN'
From an engraving

pandemonium that must have been more terrible to hear than that attending the assassination of Cæsar. Through all the ages it will stand out as the hell of hells.' [1]

As Laura Keene advanced from the wings to the center of the stage to ascertain the cause of the confusion and uproar, Miss Harris leaned out of the box and called:

'Miss Keene! Miss Keene! Bring some water, please!'

Not until Miss Keene heard the direful exclamations: 'The President has been shot!' 'It must have been that man who jumped upon the stage!' 'Who was he?' 'The President has been assassinated!'— did she fully comprehend.

As Major Rathbone had not yet removed the bar to the box entrance, and as there was no way to reach the President except from the stage, Dr. Charles Taft was hoisted over the heads of the people to the side of the stricken Lincoln. Miss Keene was soon on hand with water and, as those about the President were too bewildered to know what to do, she held his head in her lap and bathed his temples.

Lincoln's clothes were torn open in search of the wound which was supposed to be in the region of his heart. Presently, by the gradually increasing discoloration of Miss Keene's dress, the wound was shown to be in his head.

Had all this happened, as set forth in many books,

[1] New York *World*, February 17, 1924.

it would prove fine presence of mind and tender thoughtfulness on the part of Laura Keene, but it seems not to have happened at all; in short, to be one of the minor fictions attending the great calamity. W. J. Ferguson, the actor, standing at the time in the first entrance with Miss Keene rehearsing a scene to be enacted later, was, with Miss Keene, witness of the whole sad affair from the moment the fatal shot was fired. He accompanied Miss Keene to the stage, over the footlights, and up the stairs into the President's box. When they had arrived there, he says:[1] 'Miss Keene stood near by *silently watching, as I was.* Mr. Lincoln remained in the rocking-chair and was lifted in it and carried past me by the doctors.'

Shocked at the shattering of a cherished memory, the author wrote to his confrère Ferguson, only to receive from him recently a letter confirming the facts as herein stated.

'I saw,' continues Ferguson,[2] 'what they had been examining so gravely, a little dark spot no larger than the head of a lead pencil, just under the right ear. I saw no blood issuing from the wound.' It is in evidence, attested by attending surgeons, that no blood did issue from the wound — until the following morning.

The order which had been given for the President's carriage to convey him to the White House was countermanded. The journey over the cobblestoned streets, it was felt, might induce a fatal hemorrhage.

[1] *Saturday Evening Post*, February 12, 1927. [2] *Ibid.*

In the rocking-chair in which he sat, the wounded Chief of the Nation was carried through the balcony, downstairs, and across the street to the Petersen residence, a theatrical boarding-house, opposite the theater. As willing hands and saddened hearts were bearing the President through the theater, seats were torn away by the audience to give the cortège freer passage. On reaching the Petersen house, because of the great length of the President, it was found necessary to place him diagonally on the bed, that very bed, Ferguson tells us,[1] strange coincidence, on which he once saw Booth lying, smoking a pipe.

When Surgeon-General Barnes had reached the President's side and carefully examined the wound, additional strength was lent to the declaration that there was no hope. Intelligence was now received that Secretary Seward had also been assassinated. The Government officials as well as the public became panic-stricken. Many believed themselves in the presence of a skillfully organized and widespread conspiracy to kill all the Government heads and that Washington was in the hands of the Confederates and was about to be burned. Later news brought the consoling assurance that, though severely wounded, Seward would recover, and that no other official had been attacked.

On the evening of the 14th of April, 1865 [says Seaton Munroe, in the *North American Review* for April, 1898 (an article often quoted because so graphic)], I was in company

[1] *Saturday Evening Post*, February 12, 1927.

with a friend walking on Pennsylvania Avenue, when a man came running down Tenth Street, approached us wildly, exclaiming, 'My God! the President is killed at Ford's Theater!' Calling to my friend to follow me, I ran to the theater, two blocks away, perceiving, as I neared it, increasing evidence of the wildest excitement, which reached its climax in the auditorium. How it was I worked my way through the shouting crowd that filled the house and found myself over the footlights on the stage, I am unable to describe.

The first person to whom I addressed a rational word was a detective, now one of the oldest in the city. I asked him who had done the shooting. When he mentioned the name of Wilkes Booth, I scouted the idea; but others insisted that Booth had been recognized in the man who had leaped from the President's box and rushed across the stage. Excited crowds during the war were nothing new to me, but I had never witnessed such a scene as was now presented. The seats, aisles, galleries, and stage were filled with shouting, frenzied men and women, many running aimlessly over one another; a chaos of disorder beyond control had any visible authority attempted to exercise it. The spot upon which the eyes of all would turn was the fatal upper stage box, opposite to which I now stood. Access to it was guarded, but presently a man in the uniform of an army surgeon was assisted by numerous arms and shoulders to climb into the box to join the medical men already there.

I was told that Laura Keene, immediately after the shot was fired, had left the stage and gone to the assistance of Mrs. Lincoln, and I soon caught a glimpse of that unhappy lady who had apparently risen from her husband's side. She stood in view for a moment, then, throwing up her arms, with a mournful cry, she disappeared from sight of the stage. I now made my way toward the box exit to

await the descent of Miss Keene, hoping to learn from her the President's condition. I met her at the foot of the staircase leading from the box, and alone. Making a motion to arrest her progress, I begged her to tell me if Mr. Lincoln was still alive.

'God only knows!' she gasped, stopping for a moment's rest. The memory of that apparition will never leave me. Attired as I had so often seen her, in the costume of her part in 'Our American Cousin,' her hair and dress were in disorder, and not only was her gown soaked with Lincoln's blood, but her hands, even her cheeks where her fingers had strayed, were bedaubed with the sorry stains! But lately the central figure in the scene of comedy, she now appeared the incarnation of tragedy. [Another minor fiction. Not impossibly Miss Keene's hair and dress were disordered. If her gown was soaked with blood, it was not Lincoln's! Major Rathbone had been wounded in the arm by Booth, and bled freely. Here it is feared the narrator is drawing somewhat upon his imagination — but it makes good reading.] Preparations were now made to remove the President to a neighboring house . . . and the theater was soon cleared and left in possession of the troops which had now arrived.

Andrew Johnson, so soon to be President of the United States, was awakened in his bed at the Kirkwood House by a senatorial friend and told of the tragedy. What a land of opportunity is America! From the tailor's bench to the Presidency! On entering the lobby of the hotel, the Senator had ordered the doors barred to protect his friend Johnson from what he believed would be a murderous attack from a desperate conspirator.[1]

[1] Soon Captain William Williams came up with his cavalry to guard

Back in the Petersen house, Major Rathbone had fainted from loss of blood from the wound Booth had given him and had been taken to his hotel. Mrs. Lincoln and her son Robert were in the tiny antechamber to the room in which the President lay. The house had been soon crowded with Cabinet officials, Senators, surgeons, physicians, and Lincoln's pastor, Dr. Gurley. Senator Charles Sumner sat on the bed at the side of Lincoln weeping like a child. Sorrow and despair sat in every face, gripped every heart.

From time to time Mrs. Lincoln came into the room where her husband, unconscious and with occasional moaning, lay breathing his last. When she could bear it no longer, her son Robert placed his arm about her and led her tenderly back to the adjoining room.

Only a day or two previously she had said to the President as they were returning from City Point and the spires of Washington came into view: 'That horrid city! There's where all our enemies are!' And Lincoln, solaced at last by the fall of Richmond and the nearness of peace, had replied: 'Not now, Mother. Not now!'

If Robert Lincoln had but accepted his father's invitation and gone to the theater with his parents! His modesty would, of course, have kept him at the rear of the box. Perhaps filial intuition and the quick ear of the soldier youth would have caught the first

the Vice-President. Johnson had little sleep that night. He paced the floor in an agitated manner, declaring repeatedly: 'They shall pay for this! They shall pay for this!' 'They' meaning the Confederate leaders who he supposed had instigated Lincoln's death.

THE DEATHBED OF LINCOLN

sound of the fatal intrusion and the disaster might have been averted.

Because of his eminence as a surgeon, Dr. John Frederick May was summoned and probed the President's wound.[1] Dr. May could give no hope that Lincoln would recover, and he and the attending physicians were doubtful that the President would have a conscious moment before passing to the Great Beyond. If only for these few sad hours, Stanton was now the virtual President of the United States. Deeply moved by the scene before him, he alternately gazed upon the pallid face of the President and quietly gave the orders necessary to protect the Nation or control the local situation. Of the actual extent and dangers of the latter he was in grave doubt and fear.

After an eight-hour vigil of the deepest anguish, it was announced, about seven o'clock in the morning, that death was near. Twenty-two minutes later the President ceased to breathe. Then, as we know, Stanton came forward to the bedside and quietly said:

'Now he belongs to the ages.'

'And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down,
As when a lordly cedar green with boughs,
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.'[2]

'No more for him life's stormy conflicts;
Nor victory nor defeat; no more time's dark events
Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.'[3]

[1] *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, XIII, 51.
[2] Edwin Markham. [3] Walt Whitman.

CHAPTER XIII

BOOTH'S MORBID THIRST FOR NOTORIETY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, so often maligned in life, was triumphant in death. Friend and foe outvied each other to do him honor, to confess their misjudgments and acknowledge his wisdom. No public man, no king, no prince nor prelate was ever more sincerely mourned or followed to his last resting-place by such imposing pageants or such vast numbers of people. Nothing, of course, can ever dim the appreciation of Americans of Washington for his fine and heroic services to the young nation. The difference of feeling toward the two great men may likely be summed up in the distinction that Washington is reverenced while Lincoln is loved, seeming to be more of the red earth of which we ourselves are formed.

As this wonderful man of the people lay in his coffin in the White House on that sad day of April 19, 1865, funeral services were held not only there but throughout America. It has been estimated that nearly thirty million people attended those services. From the White House he was carried to the Capitol, where, guarded by the most distinguished soldiers of the army and navy, he lay in the Rotunda for twenty-four hours. Thousands of people passed his coffin and gazed pathetically upon the face of the dead Emancipator. How fitting, how inspiring it would have been

if the remains of Lincoln, who gave his life for the preservation of the Nation, had been entombed under the dome of the Nation's Capitol!

Four eventful years earlier, Lincoln had come from Springfield to Washington. Over the same route he was borne back attended by the sobs of a sorrowing people who 'lined the entire distance, almost without interval, standing with uncovered heads, mute with grief as the somber cortège swept by. . . . Watch fires blazed along the route in the darkness, and by day every device that could lend picturesqueness to the mournful scene and express the woe of the people was employed.'

Thus were conveyed to their western home and laid away forever the remains of the man whose gaunt person and rustic manners were often ridiculed, the man who broke the bonds of the slave and wrote those imperishable masterpieces of literature — the Emancipation Proclamation, the Second Inaugural Address, and the Gettysburg Speech; he who 'sought to conquer, not persons, but prejudices,' and is to-day 'the tenderest memory of our world.'

And this was the man whom the fanatic John Wilkes Booth killed under the insane impression that he was a 'tyrant' — a 'tyrant' who, in very truth, was the best friend the South ever knew, that South for whom Booth slew him. Many were the touching incidents linked with the great man's passing. To the writer two especially stand forth in sad remembrance:

Lincoln's small son 'Tad' was inconsolable over the loss of his father. They had been great chums. Immediately succeeding the event which plunged the Nation into such sorrow, the weather, as if in sympathy, was very gloomy. Finally the sun shone again. 'Tad' asked some one who was calling on his mother, 'Do you think my father has gone to heaven?' 'I have no doubt of it!' was the reply. Then 'Tad' explained in his broken way: 'I am glad he has gone there, for he never was happy after he came here. This was not a good place for him.'

Elbert Hubbard tells of his father running home one day and, after breathlessly informing little Elbert's mother that Lincoln had been killed, burst into tears. Elbert had never seen a man cry. It greatly affected him. He thought it a terrible thing. All day long the church bells tolled. Night came and the stars appeared. The little boy thought it curious that the stars should come out — for Lincoln was dead.

If only John Wilkes Booth could have known the real truth of the situation, known what horror his rash deed would awaken in the breasts of many people in the South; if only John Wilkes Booth had been sufficiently himself to realize the sorrow he was to cause even those two little boys — such was the sane tenderness of the man — Lincoln would never have been slain. Booth was not a fiend, though he committed an atrocious deed. He was a fanatic who felt, as all fanatics feel, that his hand was guided by the Omnipotent.

Booth's Morbid Thirst for Notoriety

'I have only heard of what has been done (except what I did myself),' he cries when he finds himself a hunted criminal in the swamps and reason had returned to him, 'and it fills me with horror.'

The next moment, as the spell comes over him again and he remembers what he thinks was his 'call' to the service of mankind and his country, he declares:

'I do not repent the blow I struck. I may before my God, but not to man.'

Those who feel that it is absurd to suppose that Booth could have been encouraged to lawlessness by anything said or done in the North against Lincoln, or that there was a sinister explanation for his seemingly cryptic remark, set down in his diary after the assassination, that he 'had almost a mind to return to Washington and clear my name, which I feel I can do,' have only to turn to Edward Everett Hale's 'James Russell Lowell and His Friends':

> I have never seen in print [says Hale] this story of that fearful night when Lincoln was killed. But one hears it frequently repeated in conversation and I see no reason why it should not be presented now.
>
> With the news of the murder of Lincoln, there came to New York every other terrible message. The office of the [New York] *Tribune*, of course, received echoes from all the dispatches which showed the alarm at Washington. There were orders for the arrest of this man, there were suspicions of the loyalty of that man. No one knew what the rumors might bring.
>
> In the midst of the anxieties of such hours, to Mr.

(Sydney Howard) Gay, the acting editor of that paper, there entered the foreman of the type-setting room. He brought with him the proof of Mr. Greeley's leading article, as he had left it before leaving the city for the day. It was a brutal, bitter, sarcastic, personal attack on President Lincoln — the man who, when Gay read the article, lay dying in Washington.

Gay read the article and asked the foreman if he had any private place where he could lock up the type to which no one but himself had access. The foreman said he had. Gay bade him tie up the type, lock the galley with this article in his cupboard, and tell no one what he had told him. Of course no such article appeared in the *Tribune* next morning.

But when Gay arrived on the next day at the office, he was met with the news that 'the old man' wanted him, with the intimation that 'the old man' was very angry. Gay waited upon Greeley.

'Are you there, Mr. Gay? I have been looking for you. They tell me that you ordered my leader out of this morning's paper. Is this your paper or mine? I should like to know if I cannot print what I choose in my own paper.' This in great rage.

'The paper is yours, Mr. Greeley. The article is in type upstairs and you can use it when you choose. Only this, Mr. Greeley, I know New York, and I hope and I believe, before God, that there is so much virtue in New York that if I had let that article go into this morning's paper, there would not be one brick left upon another in the *Tribune* office now. Certainly I should be sorry if there were.' Mr. Greeley was cowed. He said not a word, nor ever alluded to the subject again.

Though this article never appeared, it was ill-considered publications of this character throughout

the North that prejudiced the minds of people against Lincoln and made enemies for the Union.

Greeley had become a 'pacifist.' He believed too many lives had been lost with no encouraging result toward saving the Union. So did Booth. Greeley was willing to sacrifice the Union for the sake of peace. So was Booth. But Booth believed that the South had a right to secede and was entitled to become a separate nation, that the North was persecuting the South, that Lincoln was the chief persecutor, and that but for Lincoln the South would be accorded its freedom. Greeley, who was willing to countenance secession, thought he was wiser than Lincoln. Many people thought the same. For a large part of its time, men of Lincoln's own Cabinet were convinced of just that. By ridicule and abuse Greeley thought he could drive the President into his (Greeley's) way of thinking. He said so. It was probably just such ridicule and abuse, passing from mouth to mouth, published in sensational journals, that later led to the destruction of other Presidents of the United States.

Booth, who, with all his visionary fervor, was no politician at all and who had nothing of philosophy in his make-up, yet had a surer grasp of Lincoln's character than the great editor of the *Tribune*. Booth knew that the only way to make Abraham Lincoln cease his efforts to preserve the Union or, as he would express it, to persecute the South, was forcibly to carry him off, or kill him. Not succeeding in carrying him off, he went mad and killed him.

Just before the presidential election in 1864, many of the North's patriotic citizens despaired of the country's situation. Thurlow Weed, for instance, wrote frankly to an English friend: 'We are beset by dangers.'

The Englishman replied: 'Settle your affairs before the crash comes. . . . I should really like to go to the United States if only to see your Lincoln. But will he soon be in Fort Lafayette, or here in exile?' [1]

It was just at this period that Booth strove hardest to put his plan of abduction into successful practice. It was at this time, too, as has been shown, that the plan had its best chance of success. But Booth's droll army of recruits, lamentably lacking the daring and grit of its leader, upset the plans by their fears and cowardice. Booth dreaded seeing Lincoln begin his second term of office. The President's unswerving fidelity to his oath to maintain the integrity of the Union made Booth fear for the ultimate success of the South.

As is quite natural, much that is contemptuous and often untruthful has been said and written about Booth's 'morbid thirst for notoriety,' his 'failure as an actor,' his 'moody disposition,' his 'suffering from the pangs of disappointed ambition,' and, for some reason, his 'embitterment against authority of any kind'; and that 'one of his wise utterances was: "The fame of the youth who fired the Ephesian dome will outlive that of the pious fools who built it."' [2]

[1] Thurlow Weed: *Autobiography*.

[2] *Leslie's Weekly*, March 26, 1908.

Booth's Morbid Thirst for Notoriety

It was safe to say such things of the slayer of Lincoln. The public hungered for expressions of that nature about Booth. No paint was — could be — too black for his picture, no pen too vitriolic for his limning. Northern 'Tories,' Copperheads, glib speechifiers, 'smart Aleck' *poseurs* who had gained an enviable notoriety for assailing the President in and out of print and whose very utterances were such as to incite some one, perhaps Booth himself, to destroy the object of their scorn, stood silent and amazed at the result of their handiwork. Because in a paroxysm of fanatical frenzy the man had lost control of himself and become guilty of an atrocious act, all his life, forsooth, must have been bad; even his profession must be made to seem contributary to his mad act.

At the time, it was said of Booth by a popular paragrapher that 'his profession and the long line of murderous characters he played prepared him for the rôle of assassin.' This was, of course, a distinct appeal by the writer to a Puritan prejudice against theaters, a prejudice that had more strength then than in these days when many of our colleges and universities have departments of the drama.

The evidence is clear that, aside from his Southern environment, Booth was most influenced by something quite aside from his professional endeavor — by the story of William Tell which we give our children to read to incite a feeling of patriotism and a detestation of tyrants.

'I am here in despair!' Booth says in his diary.

'And why? For doing what Brutus was honored for and what made Tell a hero.'

He had never played either Tell or Brutus. It is an interesting fact that when he played in 'Julius Cæsar' with his brothers Junius and Edwin on November 25, 1864, at the Winter Garden in New York, the rôle assumed by him was that of Mark Antony, who by persuasive eloquence so incites the Roman populace against the assassins of the 'ambitious Cæsar' that they rise and ultimately avenge Cæsar's death. Mark Antony was one of the last of Booth's stage performances and the play in which the character figures has in it Shakespeare's powerful arraignment against the conspiracy of the assassins, 'all, all honorable men.' Reasoning by analogy, this should have 'prepared' Booth for anything else but 'the rôle of assassin.'

True, he did play the hunchback tyrant Richard III, but he also played Romeo in 'Romeo and Juliet' and, Raphael in 'The Marble Heart' and Claude Melnotte in 'The Lady of Lyons,' plays so drenched with love and romance as to neutralize the ill effect of any tragedies.

It is ridiculous to say that Booth's profession 'prepared him for the rôle of assassin.' The statistics of his profession controvert and resent the insinuation. It were an easy task, and as cheap, to name numerous prominent people whose profession kept them in constant 'preparation' for the rôles of saints but who, nevertheless, became murderers.

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FOR THE

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JUNIUS BRUTUS
EDWIN AND
JOHN WILKES

"FILII PATRI DIGNI DOMIDORES."

Julius Cæsar

JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH as . . . CASSIUS
EDWIN BOOTH as . . . . . BRUTUS
JOHN WILKES BOOTH as MARC ANTONY

Booth's Morbid Thirst for Notoriety

Inherited mental aberration, temporary or continuous, is the only explanation. Until this overcame John Wilkes Booth, he was as fair in mind and as fair in heart as the generality of young men of his time and day, and much fairer in person.

As to Booth's morbidity: as a matter of fact, except for the months of absorption in the abduction scheme, Booth was the gayest and happiest of mortals, the light and life of any circle of which he became a part. He was a strong contrast to his brother Edwin whose melancholy John Wilkes thought so appropriate to his close association with Hamlet.

'No, no!' says Blanche de Bar Booth, in a recent letter to the writer, 'John Wilkes Booth was no common assassin. Some overpowering force of evil must have been at work within his frenzied brain. Amid his associates and with those who knew him well, he was loved for his kindly nature, his generosities, and the qualities of a refined gentleman.

'In my early girlhood, I lived a long time with my grandmother Booth, in Baltimore. I shall always remember John, as we called him, as a very lovable boy.'

The traditions of the theater and the written and spoken word of players tell us how much actors and actresses loved Booth, and in what gay spirits he kept everybody during his engagements with the jokes and tricks he played even while the plays were in progress.

If to have a young man's ambition for success has

anything morbid in it, Booth was morbid. If in one's twenties to be already accepted as a worthy descendant of a great actor-father and possessing an income running well into the thousands because of an appreciative public is to be regarded as a 'failure,' then John Wilkes Booth was a failure, not otherwise. As evidence of the ardor he felt for the cause he had espoused, he points out, in a letter to his brother-in-law, John S. Clarke, how gladly he surrenders the position he has attained through gratifying progress in his profession. This certainly does not indicate on his part any 'pangs of disappointed ambition.'

In the companies of his novitiate Booth was a lovable, attractive fellow. Edwin Booth, seeing him at his beginning, thought him not likely to set the Thames on fire, an opinion he revised at a later date, but there is no evidence or tradition among managers or actors that he was insubordinate or not amenable to the laws of the theater.

The only authority left to which he was said to be opposed is the authority of the Federal Government with Lincoln at its head. Him he regarded as the unjust opponent of States' Rights. On that subject he became a monomaniac, the outcome of which was a great tragedy. Nor does it necessarily follow because Booth killed Lincoln that he was actuated thereto by a craving for notoriety. He had a plentiful amount of ambition as becomes all young men, an ambition already rewarded by constantly increasing fame and fortune.

Booth's Morbid Thirst for Notoriety

Fate and his profession brought him into an environment of Southern extremists. Being Southern born he was already half won. He was young and highly impressionable. The inevitable happened. He espoused the cause of the South — secession and slavery. With the wild enthusiasm of youth he evolved a plan, abduction, by which he hoped to serve his cause and stop a war to which he was bitterly opposed. There seems nothing ignoble or morbid in that. In all wars plans, plots quite aside from those among the actual contending parties, are in constant process of formation, none of them with so little cruelty and suffering in them as in that of Booth's.

If Booth had been a man of no family, no position, no prospects, a thoughtless boy carelessly, wantonly flinging a lighted cigarette into a powder magazine, there might be some reason for the accusation of 'a morbid craving for notoriety,' or impaling him with the overtaxed phrase of the youth who fired the Ephesian dome and those who have no respect for foolish builders of churches. But Booth already had a goodly share of that fame which the Ephesian dome-firer was seeking, as we already know, and in his desperate attempt to serve the South he was willing to risk that fame and all that was most precious in life.

It is easy way-finding to the declaration that he sought to be a real hero rather than one of tinsel. Why not? What is there unworthy or dishonorable in that? He was no fool. He knew that if he could successfully carry off Lincoln and it led to the cessa-

tion of the war, or to the acknowledgment of the South, or both, that some acclaim would certainly come to him, of course; but he had a higher motive than mere acclaim and applause as is shown from the beginning in his youthful and fiery letter to John S. Clarke in which he states that people will think him mad, no doubt, but that he cannot choose, because of his love for the South, but seek to make a prisoner of 'this man' (Lincoln), the cause of all the misery of Southern people.

It is to be doubted that there is any intelligent mind that does not envision the personal advantage of any altruistic effort in which it is engaged. It may not be given words, but it is always present, if only subconsciously. After Booth had gone quite mad from disappointment, rage, and drink and had stooped to murder, it has been difficult if not impossible for the average person to conceive him capable of any patriotic or other kindly motive. Nevertheless, he had one, as has been shown.

One of the saddest and most extraordinary things in connection with the great tragedy was the ultimate fate of the five persons in the President's box on the night of the assassination.

Here we have five human beings in a narrow space — the greatest man of his time in the glory of the most stupendous success in our history, the idolized chief of a nation already mighty, with illimitable vistas of grandeur to come; his beloved wife, proud and happy; a pair of betrothed lovers with all the promise of felicity that youth,

wealth, social position could give them; and this young actor, handsome as Endymion on Latmos, the pet of his world. The glitter of fame, happiness and ease was upon the entire group, but in an instant everything was changed with the blinding swiftness of enchantment.

Quick death was to come to the central figure of that company, the central figure, we believe, of the great and good men of the century. Over all the rest the blackest fates lowered menacingly, fates from which a mother might pray that kindly death would save her children in infamy. One was to wander with the stain of murder on his soul, with the curses of a world upon his name, with a price set upon his head, in frightful physical pain till he died a dog's death in a burning barn; the stricken wife was to pass the rest of her days in melancholy and madness; of these two young lovers, one was to slay the other and then end his days a raving maniac.[1]

More. The man who, against orders, shot and killed John Wilkes Booth, or claimed to have done so, tried to exterminate a Kansas legislature of which he had been appointed doorkeeper. He was adjudged insane and sent to an asylum.

Still more. Preston King and Senator James S. Lane, two men who closed the White House doors against Anna Surratt, seeking to appeal to President Johnson on behalf of her convicted mother, both committed suicide.

[1] Nicolay and Hay: *Abraham Lincoln*, x, 274.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHASE

The course taken by Booth after the assassination was the same as had been chosen for the abduction of Lincoln. Booth would have been wise to have taken Atzerodt with him to act as ferryman across the Potomac. Much valuable time was lost in crossing the river. The difference may well have been one of escape instead of capture. Though Atzerodt balked at murder (he was to have killed Vice-President Johnson), it was likely he would have consented to accompany Booth in his flight. His nerve, or lack of it, would have been equal at least to that action.

The route and the details for the plan had been arranged by the chief conspirator with such care and were so adapted to the man's make-up and accomplishments, horsemanship, celerity, etc., that, but for the accidental trip caused by his spur catching in the fold of the flag drapery as he leaped from the box to the stage, he would have been across the Potomac and well into Virginia before any intelligent plan had been formulated for his capture. The brief struggle between Booth and Major Rathbone, who sought to hold the assassin, not unlikely unsteadied Booth as he poised for the jump.

He could not plan to reach Richmond, which had been his goal during the days of the abduction plot,

as Federal troops since the fall of the Capital were now in possession of it and the surrounding country. He hoped only to reach some Confederate army which, hailing him as a hero, would see to it that he reached a place of security from capture, perhaps in the mountains of Kentucky or Tennessee.

It is not likely that he would have succeeded in baffling discovery, the hue and cry and the rewards for his apprehension were so great, but Surratt eluded capture many months and Booth was a much more intelligent and resourceful man than Surratt, even allowing for the latter's experience as a war spy in avoiding detection. From the Confederate point of view Surratt's services in carrying dispatches through the Union lines to Southern emissaries in Canada are not to be minimized, but he was actuated by no such fanatical zeal as Booth possessed. Not for a moment did he imagine, as John Wilkes Booth did, that he was destined to straighten out the difficulties of the world, particularly as they related to the war between the North and the South. Surratt was cunning, adroit. Booth was creative, daring.

It was dare-deviltry of the most extraordinary kind for a man deliberately to put himself into a trap from which there was no escape except by a precipitous leap of ten or fifteen feet to be made in front of hundreds of people whose beloved President he had just slain. None but the mind of a bold monomaniac would have conceived and risked such a thing. And it was uncanny that, in planning for his escape, Booth

should dare rely upon the few seconds of stunned inactivity which always follow any sudden shock. He took the chance, and it succeeded. He was a bold, daring, adventurous fellow accustomed to athletic exercise of all kinds. What a pity the queer slant in his mind sent his energies in the wrong direction! Along the right channel of life what a credit and joy he would have been to mankind!

He was a splendid horseman and had all a boy's love of 'showing off.' In passing a crowd of villagers in or near the country home of the family at Belair, Maryland, he would, just as we later ones have seen our modern Buffalo Bills do, drop his handkerchief and, returning on a gallop, lean over from the saddle with extreme grace and ease and daintily sweep the handkerchief again into his possession. The neighbors of Tudor Hall, the ancient family homestead, still retain the tradition of his setting up bottles along the stone fence to be picked off by his unerring aim. This piece of information should offer an excellent cue to some brilliant mind to point out that even in his youth Booth was training for the assassination of Lincoln.

Booth's détour to Dr. Mudd's cost him many hours of precious daylight before he could push on again with the hope of placing the Potomac River between him and his pursuers. It was wonderful that he could endure as much as he did before seeking relief from the pain with which he was racked. After leaving Dr. Mudd's, despite all their knowledge of the roads,

Booth and Herold lost their way in the marshes. They luckily met a negro named Swan who directed them to the comparatively palatial residence of Samuel Cox, a notorious secessionist. Booth identified himself to Cox by the India ink initials 'J. W. B.' on his hand. Cox pretended before the negro to be afraid to receive them. The negro was in no wise fooled. Once the door was closed, Booth was smothered with praise and congratulations! According to Baker [1] of the Secret Service, by peeping through the window the negro Swan saw Booth, Herold, and Cox feasting at table for hours. Booth was now in the presence of a man who was not afraid — before Booth — to give expression to his appreciation of the 'sacrifice' that had been made for the South, for the cause so near to both their hearts. We may be sure there was much hero worship at the feast and that 'Davy' Herold saw to it that Booth's halo was properly adjusted. Every detail of the 'sacrificial' service was revamped, no doubt with emphasis. Booth unquestionably felt that this was but the beginning of the glorification that awaited him, a foretaste of that which would hush every qualm of conscience that might arise to accuse him. Cox no doubt encouraged the belief in Booth that political necessity justified the 'sacrifice.' Booth was now the guest of a descendant of the Bayards and the Baltimores. If that cavalier descendant felt aught as to the futility at this time of a 'sacrifice' made for a cause that was

[1] Lafayette C. Baker: *History of the Secret Service*, 468.

already lost, inherited gentility and tact doubtless forbade mention of the fact.

Samuel Cox turned Booth and Herold over to his foster brother, Thomas A. Jones. For six perilous days and five equally perilous nights, from Sunday to Thursday, the hunted men lay hidden in an almost impenetrable pine thicket not more than a mile or two from the Cox residence. Jones guided, guarded, and fed them. At first Jones was not sure that he cared to meet Booth. The war was practically over and the cause he loved was lost. 'To assist in any way the assassin of Lincoln,' he says, 'would jeopardize my life.' He insisted upon seeing the men first, and was directed by Cox to their hiding-place. The meeting was a dramatic one:

As I drew near to the hiding-place of the fugitives, the place to which Cox had sent them [and doubtless where many another fugitive or hunted Confederate had lodged] I stopped and gave the signal. Presently a young man came cautiously out of the thicket and stood before me. He was armed and ready to shoot if need be.

'Who are you and what do you want?' he asked.

'I came from Cox: I am a friend and you have nothing to fear.'

He looked at me searchingly for a moment and then said: 'Follow me!' and led the way for about thirty yards into the thick undergrowth where Booth was lying.

'This is a friend sent by Captain Cox,' he said, and that was my introduction to John Wilkes Booth.

He was lying on the wet, cold ground, his head supported by his hand. His weapons of defense were close beside him. An old blanket was partly thrown over him. His

slouch hat and crutch were lying by him, he was exceedingly pale, and his features bore traces of intense suffering. I have seldom seen a more handsome man. His voice was pleasant and his manner polite. Murderer though I knew him to be [this narration was years after the war. At the time they met, Jones probably looked upon Booth as anything but a murderer], my sympathies were so enlisted in his behalf that I determined (like any loyal old Southerner) to get him into Virginia. . . . He held out his hand and thanked me; also said:

'I killed President Lincoln, but John Wilkes Booth will never be taken alive!'

I visited them daily, giving them food, newspapers, and any information I could, for six days. . . . He never tired of the newspapers and there, surrounded by the sighing pines, he read the *just* condemnation of his deed [here, no doubt, Jones is choosing his words to suit his audience] and the price that was offered for his life.[1]

As Jones paused in the narrative, O. H. Oldroyd, to whom he was speaking, draws an interesting comparison between Booth the assassin and Booth the actor:

There flashed before my mind the brilliant scene of the theater where in the past he had often appeared, with its lights, its music, its throngs of patrons, its gayety, all gathered to do honor to John Wilkes Booth. His friends were many, his admirers legion, his future in his own hands to make or mar, and yet he chose to perform as the closing act of his life that awful tragedy that should sink him into the abyss of disgraceful oblivion — pitied yet despised.[2]

[1] Oldroyd: *Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, 103, 104.

[2] *Ibid.*, 104.

When all is considered, it is difficult indeed for even the most prejudiced being not to feel something of pity and regret for the blasted young life, which had been so promising, of John Wilkes Booth.

'It seems like the old times come back again,' writes the Booth mother to her oldest son Junius, when she hears of the carousing of one of her other boys. What 'old times'? Those, of course, which had brought her great anguish, when the Elder Booth had, by drink, driven his already eccentric mind beyond the limit, had become temporarily deranged, and had sought the solace of her arms to be nursed back to health.

'From childhood,' says Asia Booth Clarke, in her book 'The Elder Booth,' 'we learned from our mother, the devoted and unwearying nurse of him who endured these periodical tortures of mind, to regard these seasons of abstractions with sad and reverent forbearance.' What would Junius Brutus Booth, called the 'Elder Booth,' unquestionably a really great histrionic genius, have done without the forbearance, tact, and supreme affection of that mother?

James E. Murdoch, an eminent actor, scholar, and gentleman, who sometimes alternated principal characters with the Elder Booth, has this to say of him in his volume, 'The Stage': 'A morbid tendency of feeling which gave rise to wild and defiant moods led him at times to things at variance with the conventionalities of society and entirely opposed to his well-

known gentlemanly character. But when the "cloud" passed and his true nature asserted itself, Booth was capable of winning the love of many and the esteem of all.' Which is a gracious way, and Murdoch was a gracious man, of stating the fact.

In the interview previously mentioned as given by Sir Charles Wyndham,[1] we find an interesting account of one of these 'wild and defiant moods' on the part of our handsome young fanatic. 'The incident,' Wyndham says, 'was a sure indication of the warp that had come in his brain.'

Soon after the war he was journeying on a railway train in company with his brother-in-law, John S. Clarke, a well-known actor and manager, who was a very close friend of mine. In the course of casual conversation, Clarke began to discuss some bit of news from the front. John Wilkes made no reply, but sat opposite with a frown on his face and drumming on the seat with his fingers. Finally Clarke made some disparaging remark about Jefferson Davis.

As the words were uttered, Booth sprang up and hurled himself upon Clarke in a wild tempest of fury, catching him by the throat. Other passengers tried to interfere, but Booth held his hold, to all appearance bent upon strangling his brother-in-law. He flung Clarke from side to side with maniac strength while his grip tightened. His face was drawn and twisted with rage.

Slowly his anger left him and his hold relaxed, none too soon for Clarke. Clarke hardly knew what had happened and looked at his assailant in amazement, gasping for breath. Booth stood over him with a dramatic gesture.

[1] *New York Herald*, June 27, 1909.

'Never, if you value your life,' he said, tensely, 'never speak to me in that way again of a man and a cause I hold sacred.'

Clarke was aware of the uneven disposition of his brother-in-law and passed the matter off as a harmless temporary aberration.... No one pretended to have an understanding of the strange man. It was just another queer prank such as his father used to play....

There was but one John Wilkes Booth — sad, mad, bad John Wilkes Booth. It is a waste of time to dwell upon what the world has lost through its possibilities gone astray, but one can scarce withhold an expression of regret over what went to pitiful wreck in John Wilkes Booth.

But quite plain and blunt is the comedian 'Joe' Cowell, in his 'Thirty Years Passed Among the Players.' Cowell was an actor who had something of a knack for expression, literary as well as dramatic. He says:

Kean's irregularities were coarse and brutal, but their ill effects recoiled exclusively upon himself; Booth's involved the destiny of those who were nearest and dearest. For years he sheltered himself from their consequences by *assuming* madness; and the long practice of this periodical 'antic disposition,' like Hamlet's, ended in its being, I believe, partly the fact.

In one of his trips to New Orleans, two itinerant preachers were on the same boat, whose zeal in distributing tracts and whose obtrusive interference with the usual amusements on a steamer, made them objectionable to all, but particularly to Booth, and he invented the following scheme of retaliation. He had a large sum of money about him and, when all were asleep in bed, he placed his pocketbook, with a portion of the notes, under the mattress

of one of the parsons and the balance, with some papers easily described, in the pocket of the other. Early in the morning, before the clergymen were up, he loudly proclaimed his loss, and a general search was ordered by the captain, to which all cheerfully submitted. When the property was found, the astonishment of all could only be equaled by the supposed culprits themselves. In vain their protestations of innocence; the boat was landed and they, according to 'Lynch law,' were to receive a severe flagellation, and then be left in the wilderness. This, of course, Booth could not permit, and he explained the joke he had intended, without dreaming of the consequences.

The indignation of the passengers, influenced by their excited feelings, might fearfully have turned the direction of their revenge, but that 'everybody knew that Mr. Booth was an oddity,' and 'at times supposed to be insane.'

In the same chapter Cowell insists that Booth 'possessed the same advantages as Kean' and that Booth was not only 'a scholar and a linguist,' but that 'he could drink with any tinker in his own language.'

It is not at all strange, then, that John Wilkes Booth, the direct descendant of Junius Brutus Booth, should himself have 'wild and defiant moods' and be subjected to 'periodical tortures of mind.'

CHAPTER XV

THE CAPTURE

In shielding Booth and Herold, Jones ran a great risk of arrest, conviction, and imprisonment in a Dry Tortugas. He might have been hanged. The war being so near its end, probably no other Southerner would have dared to take the risk he assumed. His decision to aid the outlaw and his companion is but another tribute to the extraordinary power of attraction which Booth possessed. As we have seen, John Surratt was won over in the same way.

Jones could easily have made a fortune by the surrender of Booth and Herold. Dropping in at the village tavern at Bryantown, 'just to learn the news,' he was introduced to Detective Williams who thought perhaps Jones might know a thing or two. Presently Williams drew Jones aside and said: 'I am authorized by the Government to offer a hundred thousand dollars for the surrender of John Wilkes Booth.' With his impenetrable 'poker face' Jones looked him in the eye and, without the quiver of a lash, replied: 'That's a good deal of money to pay for one man.'

Asked if he were not tempted by the offer, Jones replied that, though he had lost all he possessed by the war, there was still something he had which was not purchasable — his honor. Jones was the type of Southerner whose life, if necessary, went with his

fidelity to a cause once he had espoused it. That is where his inherited Cavalier instincts asserted themselves.

With troops hunting him up and down the land, often desperately close to him, with gunboats churning the waves in his pursuit, for weary days and nights, suffering intense physical pain, Booth, prostrate on the ground with a broken, swollen leg, and in great mental anguish, was, indeed, a pitiable object. Here there came first to this mentally and soulfully misguided knight errant complete disillusionment. It was a bitter, bitter blow almost impossible to bear.

Jones brought Booth the daily papers which he eagerly devoured. Every word he read was a scorpion's sting. No comfort from any quarter, North or South, East or West; all, all condemnatory and wrathful. Nothing of admiration for the daring of his deed or comprehensive of the object he had in mind in taking the President's life — to stop the war and secure recognition for the South. He was branded as a common cut-throat, a hireling in the hands of the leaders of the Confederacy, a creature who merited the swiftest annihilation. Absolute silence from the Northern Copperheads who had been so scornful and outspokenly wrathful with Lincoln and, to Booth's bewilderment, expressions of sorrow — words that cut deep into his soul — from the South![1]

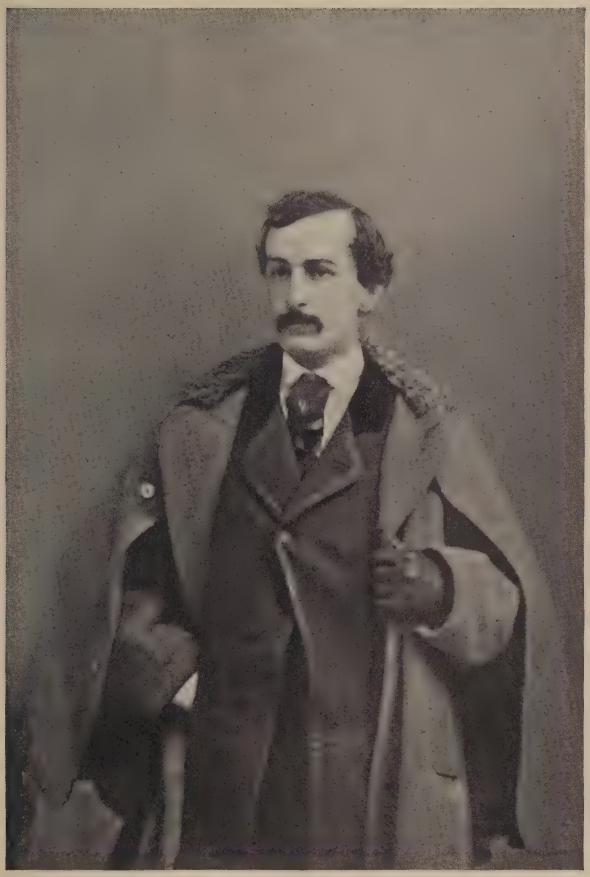
[1] 'I am sure there is no pardon in heaven for me,' he writes in his diary, 'since man condemns me so!'

The Confederate general, Johnston, was, at the time, on the point of surrender to General Sherman, who told Johnston of Lincoln's assassination. Large drops of perspiration came out on his forehead and the Southern general exclaimed:

'It's a disgrace to the age! I hope the North will not charge it to the Confederate Government.'

With unbelievable haste and rancorous prejudice, guided by Stanton, that was precisely what the North did. But times were dour and excitement high. The condemnation of the North was to be expected, of course, but that the officials of the South, instead of applauding, should be horrified by the 'sacrifice' in their own interests, benumbed Booth with astonishment and despair. What had he done to deserve this? He had dared to put into execution that which many people in the South — his South — and, God forgive them, many people in the North had had in their minds and hearts and, not infrequently, upon their lips.

After the assassination, Booth penciled down some reflections in a pocket diary from which excerpts have been given. It was a valuable document, proving much. For fear of heroic expressions in it which might afford the South some excuse for secret gloating, some rallying point, this diary never saw the light from the time Colonel L. C. Baker placed it in Stanton's hands until long after the trial, condemnation, and death of the chief conspirators. It is doubtful if it would ever have come into view if Baker had



JOHN WILKES BOOTH

not mentioned it in his 'History of the Secret Service.' It then got a thorough airing in the comic trial of Andrew Johnson when it was sought to prove him a party to the attempt on his own life.

The first entry in the diary is:

April 13, 14, *Friday the Ides.* Until to-day nothing was ever thought of sacrificing to our country's wrongs. [He calls it 'sacrificing.' It is important to note that he tells us that the plot to murder was of sudden determination.] For six months we had worked to capture. [Here Booth shows the existence of an earlier plot to abduct.] I struck *boldly* [author's italics] and not as the papers say.[1]

It stung this proud fanatic to the quick to have it intimated, let alone printed, that he could be guilty of a cowardly act.

I walked with a bold step through a thousand of his friends. A colonel [*sic*] at his side. I shouted *Sic semper before* [author's italics] I fired.

It has been repeatedly and incorrectly stated that Booth cried 'Sic semper tyrannis' as he reached the stage after leaping from the box, that he defiantly hurled the words at the audience. W. J. Ferguson, an actor in the cast on the night of the murder, who,

[1] As to the identity of the perpetrator of the murder Booth scorned all thought of concealment. He wrote to the Washington *National Intelligencer* proudly giving the names of the conspirators, with his own name first. So, too, he scorned to disguise himself to avoid detection. Had he assumed a disguise, his apprehension would have been difficult indeed. As it was, he was well on his way to escape for many hours before there was any positive clue to his identity, or any well-organized plan arranged for his capture. His fanatic mind easily excused the stealth of his murderous assault upon Lincoln.

standing in the stage entrance, saw Booth jump, told the present writer that Booth did not speak after leaping to the stage. Why should he? It was his business to make his escape and he attended to that business very swiftly.

In the first entry of the diary is to be seen also evidence, the frenzy having abated, of a return to something like normal thought and feeling. Though Booth declares he can never repent the act — he adds immediately, 'though we hated to kill.' The fanatic mind felt that the 'sacrifice' must be made for the 'cause,' and, the emotional excitement having subsided, the soul of the man deplored the killing.

A little farther on an entry is abruptly ended in the middle of a sentence, possibly because of some alarm or, probably, from what follows in the next entry, because of an abandoned attempt to cross the Potomac. It is a week, or 'Friday [April] 21,' before he resumes:

> After being hunted like a dog through swamps, woods, and last night chased by gunboats till I was forced to return wet, cold, and starving, with every man's hand against me [None so poor to do him reverence, all the word-patriots had skulked to cover], I am here in despair. And why? For doing what Brutus was honored for — what made Tell a hero.

Booth believed that Lincoln's ambition was to become King of America. He said so repeatedly. However, his fanaticism did not cause him to kill Lincoln because of Lincoln's supposed ambition, but because, to Booth, Lincoln alone was the bar to

Southern success. The deed done, we find the crazed zealot rebelling bitterly that he was not acclaimed as were Brutus and Tell. Booth goes on to speak of the Government not allowing to be printed the explanation he had left behind 'to clear my name.' This paper we now know never reached the Government. It seems so strange that this man, so sane and remarkable in many other respects, should be so emotionally weak and overcome by fanatic feeling as to be absolutely convinced he could ultimately be exculpated by a letter to a government the head of which he had struck down in death. The letter having been suppressed, as he supposes, he now, through this same diary, attempts again to justify his atrocious act by an appeal to posterity. But what most seems to astonish and chagrin Booth is that 'every man's hand' should be against him. In Washington, except in official circles, and even there not infrequently, among the Democrats opposed to the war, especially the numerous followers of the deposed General McClellan, among the people of the Northwestern Confederacy, the Sons of Liberty, the supporters of Vallandigham, and among other opponents of Lincoln and his policies, even among prominent Republicans like Greeley,[1] etc., detractions of the President, disagreements with his policies, and reflections upon his incapacity had been openly given expression.

[1] 'We cannot conquer ten millions of people united in solid phalanx against us, powerfully aided by Northern sympathizers and European allies.' (Greeley's Prayer of Twenty Millions Letter to Lincoln, in *The American Conflict*, 250.)

Now that Booth had stepped into the breach and removed the object of so much apparent distrust and hatred, not one voice is raised in appreciation or thankfulness for his having done the very thing so many people seemed feverishly to desire. He was too young, too inexperienced to understand that in their hearts they did not really want the President 'removed,' and that many were merely exercising the dangerous privilege of indulging in empty bluster, or standing out in opposition with the idea of attracting personal attention, a favorite gesture of the arrested mind in time of peril. There were, as it seemed to Booth, too many elements in the North agreeing with the policy of the South, too many parties and people opposed to Lincoln not to warrant some among them being brave enough to be outspoken in his behalf. One or two barely hinted such a thing. That they escaped instant annihilation was a miracle. All this was a terrifying disappointment to Booth, a tragic shock to his credulity as well as to his vanity. He had risked his all for the South, his all for her supporters — and behold their indifference, their ingratitude. He had sown a whirlwind. He was to reap destruction.

No determination that Booth had in mind was more fixed than, if he were to meet with failure in his rash attempt, that he would not be taken alive. 'To-night,' he goes on in the second entry in his diary, 'I try to escape these bloodhounds once more.' (How theatric he is throughout! 'Pursuers,' 'soldiers'

were too tame for his use. 'Bloodhounds' is dramatic.) '. . . I have too great a soul to die like a criminal!' he cries. He is thoroughly convinced of that and was as far as man could be from believing himself a criminal or a mere bravo. He felt himself allied to a sacred cause, no less important than the deliverance of a nation from bondage and the drying up of 'oceans of blood' now being shed in an unholy war. He declared, quite fanatically, that he was the instrument selected by God for the purpose. It is the age-old cry of the crack-brained zealot, the very cry of Boston Corbett, the disobedient sergeant who ended Booth's career.

At last the faithful Jones decides that the time is propitious to make the crossing to Virginia. With all their weapons, a compass, and a bit of candle to make sure of the boat's direction in the dark, Booth and Herold emerge from the fastness of their hiding-place and, through a tortuous and almost undiscoverable path, reach the water's edge. Once seated in the boat, Herold at the oars, Booth in the stern, there follows a deserved wealth of grateful expression to Jones who had kept the faith. The boat is shoved off into the starless night and the two most hunted outlaws in the world disappear from view, instantly shrouded in the fog and mist overhanging the river like a pall. They row all night and get nowhere. It is as if their direction were being confused by the same Hand that confused the tongues of Babel.

Morning finds them ten miles up the river and no

nearer to the other side than when they started. Hiding all day in the swamps they start afresh at night and at last reach the Virginia shore. Helped by one or two people, they finally get to the home, eight miles inland, of Dr. Richard Stewart. Because several times arrested for aiding and abetting people of the South, they find Dr. Stewart chary about giving assistance. Helping them to some food, he passes them on to a negro named Lucas who lived in a cabin on a distant part of the doctor's plantation. Here the fugitives spend the night.

Booth is so disturbed at Stewart's treatment, which contrasted so strongly with that of Cox and Jones, at coldness and discourtesy from a Virginian the motto of whose State he had cried at the moment of firing on Lincoln, that he took valuable time to write the doctor a letter of rebuke:

DEAR SIR:

Forgive me, but I have some pride. I hate to blame you for your want of hospitality: you know your own affairs. I was sick and tired, with a broken leg, in need of medical advice. I would not have turned a dog from my door in such a condition.

However, you were kind enough to give me something to eat, for which I not only thank you, but, on account of the reluctant manner in which it was bestowed, I feel bound to pay for it.

It is not the substance but the manner in which kindness is extended that makes one happy in the acceptance thereof. The sauce to meat is ceremony; meeting were bare without it.[1]

[1] *Macbeth*, Act III, Sc. IV.

Be kind enough to accept the enclosed two dollars and a half (though hard to spare) for what we have received.

Yours respectfully

STRANGER

April 24, 1865.

It has been said that 'the tone of this letter may serve to show that neither crime, nor wounds, nor suffering, nor banishment, not even imminence of capture and a felon's doom, could quell the vain-glorious self-consciousness of this hero of the boards.' [1] Perhaps. But it is not to be forgotten that Booth was a young man full of romance and exaggeration. He belonged to an age of the theater-theatric. There was nothing in him of the sedate professor calmly writing history at his ease. He was a hot-headed, emotional young Thespian of twenty-six, full of life and self-importance and with an enthusiastic ambition to straighten out the world. And he thought with the help of God he had accomplished it. It is not to be denied that he made a gigantic mess of the attempt. Whatever else the letter shows, sensitiveness, pride, and power of expression are not lacking.

The next morning (April 27, 1865) the negro Lucas drove Booth and Herold twelve miles to Port Conway. The ferryman here was fishing on the opposite bank. They tried to induce him to take them across the Rappahannock to Port Royal. Seeing but two fares in sight, the boatman preferred to continue fishing.

[1] Dewitt: *Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, 80.

At this juncture Jett, Ruggles, and Bainbridge, Confederate cavalrymen, a part of Mosby's disbanded command, put in an appearance. Herold accosts them. Booth identifies himself to Jett by the initials tattooed on his (Booth's) hand. The soldiers threatened to shoot the ferryman if he did not instantly bring across his craft and transport the entire party. The threat had the desired effect. The party were poled across the stream, Booth astride the horse of 'Willie' Jett who had been quickly attracted to the player. Once in Port Royal it was but three miles to the farm home of Richard H. Garrett, an acquaintance of Jett's. Here, under the name of Boyd, Jett, now aware of what Booth had done, left the fugitive, explaining that Booth was a wounded Confederate. Herold went on with the soldiers to Bowling Green, thirteen miles away, to reconnoiter. The following day, Herold returned to Booth at the Garrett farm. Bainbridge and Ruggles came with him, they having merely escorted Jett to Bowling Green where he had gone to see his sweetheart, the first meeting since the war. Now Bainbridge and Ruggles wend their way back to Port Royal, their destination.

That afternoon the Garrett family are much disturbed by the passing of Federal cavalry. It is the Baker-Conger troop in search of Booth and Herold. The Garretts, however, are ignorant of that fact. Booth and Herold at once hide in the brush. Garrett, becoming suspicious of them, requests them to leave. They go, but return at night and beg to be given

shelter. Booth refuses to go upstairs to sleep and is directed to an old tobacco warehouse used for storing furniture. At dinner Booth had admired a horse owned by young John Garrett and had offered to purchase the animal. A gift from General Grant as a result of the surrender of General Lee, the young man did not care to part with the horse. Suspicious that it might be Booth's intention to make off with the horse in the night, John Garrett and his brother, after taking the precaution to lock the door of the barn on Booth and Herold, slept in an adjoining corn crib.

Notwithstanding that about ten thousand cavalrymen and twenty-five hundred policemen had been set on Booth's trail three days after the assassination, no really intelligent plan of action for the capture had been devised, nor had any clue to the criminals been discovered. Then Lloyd, Mrs. Surratt's tenant at Surrattsville, weakened in his denials, and as a result, all lower Maryland and Virginia overflowed with soldiers and policemen in pursuit.

Lafayette C. Baker, colonel and chief of the secret service arm of the Government, was called into action by Secretary Stanton.

'As I entered the Secretary's office,' says Baker, 'and he recognized me, he turned away to hide his tears. He remarked: 'Well, Baker, they have performed what they long threatened to do; they have killed the President. You must go to work. My whole dependence is upon you.' [1]

[1] *History of the Secret Service*, 525.

By 'they' Stanton meant the Confederate Government. To him any effort against the North, naturally, must come from the South, and especially from Jefferson Davis whom Stanton absurdly believed capable of any villainy. It was always impossible for Stanton to conceive that Jefferson Davis, a graduate of West Point, a distinguished soldier and statesman in the service of his country before the Rebellion, and once Secretary of State, might, notwithstanding a difference of political opinion, be a man of honor and a gentleman. Stanton's feeling against Davis was almost as fanatical as that of Booth's against Lincoln — but it was so with many people in the North.

Baker lost no time. He offered rewards and distributed photographs and descriptions of Booth and Herold and of the other conspirators. The immediate result was the arrest of Atzerodt and Dr. Mudd. Lloyd was already in custody. When Baker's men brought in a negro who had seen Booth and Herold cross the Potomac, Baker knew he had struck the right track. Consulting his maps, Baker divined that Booth's flight must take him through Port Royal on the Rappahannock. Securing a force of twenty-five cavalrymen, with Lieutenant Doherty at the head and Lieutenant L. B. Baker and Colonel E. J. Conger in command, he sent them as swiftly as possible by boat to Belle Plain on the lower Potomac. Their instructions were not to return until they had found Booth. They debarked at Belle Plain and rode on to Port Conway. Here they learned of the negro ferry-

man having carried two men, one with a crutch, toward Bowling Green. Hearing of Jett's courtesy to Booth and of Jett's visit to Bowling Green, they pushed on and arrested him there, in bed. Jett explained his part in the matter and, with him as guide, the troop of cavalrymen rode back to the Garrett home, where they arrived about 2 A.M.

Old Garrett, though scared, seemingly tried to screen the hunted men by declaring that they had gone to the woods. Colonel Conger ordered a rope and threatened to hang him. Young John Garrett, coming in from his watch in the corn crib, seeing his father's danger, told the soldiers that the two men they were hunting were in the barn or warehouse.

With a whoop of joy, the soldiers immediately surrounded the building, and that was the beginning of the end of John Wilkes Booth, 'beautiful as Endymion on Latmos.' He who was 'the glass of fashion, and the mould of form,' the gifted, fascinating young man who was confidently expected to rival his brother Edwin in histrionic fame, had now but minutes to live.

How will he face death? He has repeatedly declared that he will not be taken alive, that he has 'too great a soul to die like a criminal.' But has he? Face to face with the inevitable, will all this seeming bravado and clap-trap of the theater fade as by the waft of a magic wand and disclose him to be a weakling who had put on 'an antic disposition' of his trade? — a pretender parading in the borrowed

plumes of a patriot-martyr, aping readiness and willingness to sacrifice his life for the freedom of a nation? Or is his prejudiced soul so steeped in the righteousness of his cause that he will mock the death which is imminent?

Will the prayers of his disconsolate family and those of his outraged friends be heard — that he be not taken alive to suffer the ignominy of a criminal's doom upon the gallows? Let us see.

The Garrett son, John, gives Lieutenant Baker the key to the warehouse. There is no light, no sound within the place. Then is heard the nervous, sudden rustling of feet and straw. Those within have become conscious of an enemy without. Baker speaks:

'To those persons in this barn I have a proposition to make: We are about to send in to you the son of the man in whose custody you are found. Either surrender to him your arms and then give yourselves up, or we'll set fire to the place. We mean to take you both, or to have a bonfire and a shooting match.' No answer.

The reluctant Garrett son is shoved in through the carefully opened warehouse door which is immediately locked again by Lieutenant Baker. Young Garrett, in low tones, is heard to deliver his message to those within.

'Damn you!' Booth presently replies. 'Get out of here! You have betrayed me!'

Garrett protests, but Booth will not listen. He seems so dangerous that John Garrett at once makes

for the door. He is thoroughly frightened and tells Baker, who let him out, that he dare not go in again. 'That man will kill me!' he says. A lighted candle had been brought from the house to the barn and, in the excitement of the situation, both Baker and Conger had been standing directly in its gleams, thus making themselves a conspicuous mark if Booth had cared to shoot; but with the removal of Lincoln, the great bar to Southern freedom, the fanatic's mission had been accomplished. He would fight to protect himself, but, as we shall see, he would not again wantonly kill.

According to the testimony, the cavalrymen seem to have been a queer lot, with very unsoldier-like desire to act independently. The tensity of the situation found some of them wanting to run away, others to shoot Booth at once, and some 'excited and fitfully silent.'

'You must surrender inside there,' Baker calls. 'There is no chance for escape. We give you five minutes to make up your mind.'

The ringing tones of Booth, clear enough to reach the women of the household some distance away on the porch, are heard to ask:

'Who are you? And what do you want with us?'

'We want you to deliver up your arms and become our prisoners.'

'But who *are* you?' Booth repeats.

'That makes no difference. We know who *you* are, and we want you. We have fifty men here [a permis-

sible misstatement; there were but twenty-five] armed with carbines and pistols. You cannot escape.'

Not a word in reply, for some little time. Then Booth speaks:

'Captain, this is a hard case, I swear. Perhaps I am being taken by my own friends.'

No reply.

'Well,' continues Booth, 'give us a little time to consider.'

'Very well, take time,' is the response.

It is said that here followed a long and eventful pause during which Booth resolved to die. Not so. Booth had long ago made that resolve in the event of failure to escape. The crisis of the situation is now whether Booth is of that fiber which will hold to so fearless a resolution. He knew how Brutus and Cassius lived, and well how they had died for what they believed a noble cause for the public good. Would he be brave enough to follow their example in dying?

'Well,' called Baker, 'we have waited long enough. Surrender your arms and come out, or we'll fire the barn.'

To this Booth replies:

'I am but a cripple, a one-legged man. Withdraw your men one hundred yards from the door, and I will come out. Give me a chance for my life, Captain. *I will never be taken alive.*'

This appeal for 'fair play,' from one who had stepped up behind an unarmed man and shot him in the back, tells more than anything else of the fanati-

cally unbalanced mind of Booth. It was the mind of a man who, convinced that a monster of iniquity had been removed, and, being brought to bay for his act, could yet appeal for 'fair play.'

Is this another dash of bravado, a 'grandstand play,' in front of an invisible audience of soldiers, or is he holding unwaveringly to his grim determination?

'We did not come here to fight,' says Baker, 'but to capture you. I say again, appear, or the barn will be fired.'

Then after requesting the 'Captain' to withdraw but 'fifty yards,' and repeating the request to give him a chance for his life, and being refused, or unanswered, Booth continues with calmness and the voice of one whose mind has been unalterably set:

'Well, then, my brave boys, prepare a stretcher for me.'

There is something about this defiant and crippled culprit that makes, not the officers, but the men afraid — a mysterious something they cannot explain, but which gives them a feeling of uneasiness. If they had their way, he would be shot instantly before, in some evil-eye manner, he does any more harm. They are not at all sure, if he should come out of that barn door, that he will not be able to shoot his way to freedom and then disappear in a cloud of stage thunder. If he could disappear in a brilliantly lighted theater before a thousand or more people, they argue, vanishing before a measly twenty-five soldiers will be child's play.

It is evident now that Booth means what he has been saying all along — that he had no private grievance, that he struck down the President because he regarded him as the chief author of all the miseries of the South: 'Our country owed all her trouble to him, a country North as well as South, as he reasoned it, that groaned beneath this tyranny and prayed for this end. And now behold,' he cries out bitterly in staggering disillusionment, 'the cold hand they extend to me!'

At this point his accomplice Herold lost his courage and begged to be allowed to surrender. This was an evident shock to Booth, who could not understand a Southerner, an accomplice, too, unwilling to die for his country. Booth was heard to say: 'You damned coward, get out of here! I don't want you to stay! I wouldn't have you stay!'

Booth was wholly indifferent now. He really felt what he had written down in his diary: 'I care not what becomes of me. I have no desire to outlive my country.'

Then he called out: 'There is a man in here who wants to surrender. He has had nothing to do with this.' Booth accepts all the blame and tries to shield Herold.

Herold, who was now at the barn door, extended his hands, in obedience to a command to do so, and was jerked out into the night.

Booth was now alone and at bay. He makes his last appeal: 'Captain, give me a chance. Draw off

your men, and I will fight them singly.' Those soldiers did not want to fight anybody, let alone Booth, singly. The 'Captain,' who was there not to lose lives but to make an arrest, said nothing in reply.

'I could have killed you six times to-night,' continues Booth, 'but I believe you to be a brave man, and I would not murder you. Give a lame man a show!' It is evident he wishes to die fighting.

It was now time for parleying to cease and for action to begin. Colonel Conger, then, leaving positive orders that not a soldier should come nearer than the prescribed distance, and under no circumstances to fire a shot, started from the front of the barn around to the right-hand corner in the rear, and, inserting a lighted wisp of straw, set fire to the stubble on the floor.[1] The straw blazed up instantly and illuminated the whole interior of the barn. While those outside were now cut off from Booth's view, he, on the contrary, was as visible as daylight could have made him.

'Behind the blaze,' says Colonel Conger, 'I saw Wilkes Booth standing upright [leaning] on a crutch. He looked like his brother Edwin, whom he so much resembled that I believed, for a moment, the whole pursuit to have been a mistake. At the gleam of the fire, Wilkes dropped his crutch and carbine and crept to the spot to espy the incendiary and shoot him dead. His eyes were lustrous like fever, and swelled and rolled in terrible beauty, while his teeth were fixed and he wore the expression of one in the calm-

[1] Dewitt: *Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, 84.

ness of frenzy. In vain he peered, with vengeance in his look; the blaze that made him visible concealed his enemy. A second he turned glaring at the fire, as if to leap upon it and extinguish it, but it made such headway that this was a futile impulse, and he dismissed it. As calmly as upon a battlefield a veteran stands amidst the hail of ball and shell and plunging iron, Booth, shifting his carbine to his left hand and drawing his revolver, turned at a man's stride and, in a kind of limping-halting jump, pushed for the door, and the last resolve of death, which we name despair, sat on his high, bloodless forehead.'

It is evident that he believes he *has* a soul which he thinks 'is too noble to permit him to die like a criminal.' At all events, it is noble enough not to allow him to 'live to be the show and gaze of the time,' nor to be 'baited with the rabble's curse.'

'As he dashed, intent to die not unaccompanied,' the Conger-Baker account goes on, 'a disobedient sergeant' (Boston Corbett, a religious fanatic) 'at an eye-hole, draws upon him the fatal bead. The barn was all glorious with conflagration, and in the beautiful ruin this outlawed man strode like all we know of wicked valor, stern in death. A shock, a shout, a gathering up of his splendid figure, as if to overtop the stature God gave him, and John Wilkes Booth fell headlong to the floor, lying there in a heap. Thus he paid the penalty of his awful crime.' And He to Whom he had addressed his prayer had spared him the disgrace of dying like a criminal on the gallows.

THE SHOOTING OF BOOTH AND THE CAPTURE OF HEROLD

This pair of lurid contemporary lithographs assumes the truth of Boston Corbett's story of the shooting, but neither the artist nor anybody else saw him shoot. The horses are an additional touch of fiction. There were no mounted men at the Garrett barn.

CHAPTER XVI

DEATH OF BOOTH

The instant Booth fell, Baker, who had been watching his every movement since the barn was fired, leaped in upon him as he lay on the ground, and swiftly wrenched the revolver from his tightly clenched hand. Baker took no chance of Booth feigning death.

All danger passed, the Garrett lad rushes in frantically and calls loudly for help to extinguish the flames, which might have been accomplished if interest were not centered in another direction, in the limp body of Booth which Baker held in his arms. Conger hears the shot and makes his way swiftly from the opposite side of the barn where he had gone to set fire to the straw. One look at Booth and there is no doubt in Conger's mind as to what had happened.

'He shot himself!'

'No, he did not, either!' Baker replies.

Not stopping then to dispute the assertion, Conger asks, 'Whereabouts is he shot? In the head or neck?' Raising Booth, he looks confidently at the head for the location of the wound. Except being a little low, it was precisely where a bullet would strike if directed by the hand of a would-be suicide.

'Yes, sir, he shot himself!' Conger repeats, now convinced.

'No, he did not!' emphatically reiterates Lieutenant Baker. It is rather evident that the two men suspect each other.

'Some one shot him,' said Baker, 'and whoever it was goes back under arrest.' At the outset the command of the party had been given to Baker. On account of Conger's greater experience in the regular army, Baker had turned over the command to him. It is plain, though, that Baker is still feeling some of his remitted authority. He had conducted all the parleying with Booth.

'Well,' said Conger, still in doubt, 'let's carry him out of here. This will soon be burning.'

Baker, as he testified at the Surratt trial, now turned up the fallen man's head and said: 'It's Booth, certainly!'

Continuing with his testimony, he declared: 'I supposed at the time that Conger shot him, and I said, "What on earth did you shoot him for?" Said he: "I did not shoot him!"'

Believing that Conger had fired the fatal shot, it was all the more a mystery to Baker in that, as Baker swore in the course of his examination: 'There were strict orders given against shooting at all. Colonel Conger had given every man the order, a number of times, not to shoot under any circumstances.' 'Then the idea flashed on my mind,' Baker continued, 'that if he [Conger] did shoot [Booth], it better not be known.'

Booth was carried out and laid on the grass 'a

little away from the door [of the barn], under a locust tree.' Conger returned to the barn to see if he could be of any service, 'but there was no water, nothing to help with, and the fire was now burning so fast that all effort to save it was given up.'

'I had a cup in my pocket,' Baker testified, 'and I took it out and called for some water. I took Booth's head upon my knee and threw some water in his face. His mouth being open, I poured some in his mouth. He blew it out and opened his eyes and made his lips go as though he would say something. He said: "Tell mother ——" and then he swooned again.' It was at this point that Conger left and went to the barn.

'Booth shortly came to again, and I was washing his face all the time,' Baker continues. 'He said in a whisper: "Tell mother I die for my country." Then I saw his wound. That was the first time I saw it. I saw that he was shot in the neck.'

Conger came back to Booth whom he supposed dead by this time and was surprised to find him still alive. Conger put his ear down close to Booth's mouth and also made out the whispered words to be as stated. To make sure, Conger repeated the words aloud and then said to Booth:

'Is that what you say?'

With head, eyes, and lips he responded:

'Yes!'

The fire now threatening further, Booth was carried to the porch of the Garrett house 'and laid on an old

straw bed or tick, or something,' Conger testified.[1] A physician was brought from Port Royal. He found the wound was in the neck, and that the bullet had cut through both sides of Booth's collar. He declared that the injured man would not live an hour.

But Booth revived still further and was soon able to talk intelligently, in a whisper. Mortally hurt, he was in great agony. His demands were unceasing. He called constantly for 'water! water!' He wanted to be turned now on his side, now on his back, and now on his face. As he had been all his life, he was humored. Conger said protestingly:

'You can't lie on your face!'

No position was comfortable to the sufferer.

'Press your hand down on my throat,' he said to Conger. Conger did so.

'Harder!' Booth demanded.

When Conger had complied, Booth tried to cough, seeking evidently to dislodge something he supposed to be in his throat which was distressing him. He was unsuccessful. He could make but little muscular effort. Evidently he wanted to talk aloud — to say much. Pity he was unable.

'Open your mouth and put out your tongue,' Conger said, 'and I'll see if it bleeds.'

Booth did as directed. Inspection revealed no blood in the throat, and he was told so.

'It [the bullet] has not gone through any part of it there,' Conger informed Booth.

[1] *Trial of the Conspirators.*

Booth's suffering was so intense that he wanted all ended. He appealed to Conger, saying:

'Kill me! Kill me!'

To the physical pain was added mental anguish that he might yet live to die the disgraceful death of a felon.

'We don't want to kill you. We want you to get well,' Colonel Conger made answer.

Booth was aware of that fact. His mind and soul now hungered for nothing so much as for death.

'I care not to outlive my country!' he had said. The bare thought of recovery now that he was a captive filled him with dismay. There rose up before the waning vision of this broken outlaw the terrifying outline of the scaffold. He did not fear death. He welcomed it. His terror, for his own, and especially for his mother's sake, was the gibbet. Though he had not quite made good his determination not to be captured alive, there was certainly little life in him now that he was taken.

Conger, impatient to be off to Washington to report the news of Booth's capture, would not even await the death momentarily expected, before rifling the pockets of the evil-doer at his feet. Conger was a soldier to whom in the line of duty moments were precious and lives incidents. He was eager, too, to carry back to his chief evidence of the victorious pursuit. He and Lieutenant Baker, while Booth was pleading anew to be killed, took what they found upon him — a knife, a pipe, a little manicure file, a

pocket compass smeared with candle drippings, the note of exchange which Booth had bought in Montreal, a diamond pin given to Booth by Dan Bryant, and found pinned to Booth's undershirt, but most important of the findings was a diary with a pocket in which were discovered the pictures of several beautiful women. It is well to note this diary. It plays an important part in the subsequent history of several people, from Andrew Johnson, seventeenth President of the United States, on down to Mrs. Surratt who, if the contents of that diary (withheld by Secretary Stanton) had been sooner disclosed, would probably never have been hanged. Written after the assassination, the diary might not have been admitted as legal evidence, but, as was declared by counsel during the Johnson Impeachment Trial, 'in all aspects it was moral evidence, carrying conviction to the moral sense.'

The diary showed Booth's previous plan to abduct Lincoln, a plan already outlined in 1864 by Booth in a letter, as we have shown, to his brother-in-law, John Sleeper Clarke. Under no circumstances was Stanton willing to admit that there was any plot whatever except the one to assassinate. He was rabidly positive that Booth was but a tool in the hands of Jefferson Davis and the leaders of the Southern Confederacy to kill Lincoln and the chief Federal officials. This was called 'The Great Conspiracy.'

Conger left Baker in command. He directed that if Booth were not dead within the hour a messenger

FOUR PHOTOGRAPHS FOUND IN POCKET OF BOOTH'S DIARY

Left to right, above: Effie Germon and Alice Grey, actresses
Below: Helen Western, actress, and a Washington society woman
See also illustration facing page 12

was to be dispatched to Belle Plain for a surgeon from one of the gunboats. That if Booth died within the hour the best conveyance possible in that forlorn district was to be commandeered to bring the body to Washington.

Presently Booth, in a feeble whisper, asked that his paralyzed arms be raised that he might see his hands. His request being complied with, he gazed mournfully at them and said: 'Useless! Useless!' They were the last words he spoke.

'Whether he bemoaned the uselessness of his hands to fight for him, or the uselessness of their mad crime, God only knows. . . . Never was sacrifice of a brilliant young life so worse than useless.' [1]

More than likely Booth bemoaned the uselessness of his hands to effect his own death.

As Conger was about to leave with the contents of Booth's pockets wrapped in a paper, others say a handkerchief, the local doctor pronounced Booth dead. It was about 7 A.M., and within twenty-two minutes of the time of day Lincoln had died. Strangely enough, Booth's wound was almost precisely in the same place as Lincoln's.

Conger rode swiftly to Belle Plain, caught the regular steamer to Washington, reached the headquarters of his chief, Lafayette C. Baker, and together they went to the War Department to see Secretary Stanton. Stanton had gone home; they followed and found him. They delivered the things

[1] Laughlin: *The Death of Lincoln*, 153.

taken from Booth. Stanton examined each article, kept the diary, and gave the rest into Colonel Baker's keeping.

But how had John Wilkes Booth really come by his death? It is likely we shall never know. The most reasonable explanation is that he died by his own hand. But even in that there is an element of doubt. He declared again and again that he would never be taken alive, that he had too great a soul to die like a criminal. He prayed God to be spared that. In addition to these declarations, all his actions were those of a desperate man who meant to sell his life as dearly as possible and to kill himself if capture were imminent. Sergeant Corbett and the other soldiers who ventured near the barn were in dread of Booth, and they and Colonel Conger felt from his speech and bearing that he would never surrender.

In a talk with one of the soldiers who had captured Booth, W. J. Ferguson was told that Booth shot himself.[1] Conger was convinced, as we have seen, that Booth shot himself. Nothing could shake that belief. He was an experienced soldier, accustomed to see men die by wounds and knew the manner of their dying. He had himself been wounded in the war. On first examining Booth, he had turned immediately to the place he believed the wound would be in corroboration of his belief. It was just as he thought. On the other hand, Lieutenant Baker was equally certain that Booth had not shot himself. Yet Baker

[1] *Saturday Evening Post*, February 12, 1927.

could not have been too certain about the matter, for we find him later accusing Conger of doing the shooting.

The fact is that both were doing a little heavy thinking. As proved by the regrettable squabble that came later over the awards, neither officer was so much concerned to know by whose hand Booth had died as to know how his death would affect them in connection with the enormous reward offered for the *capture* of the assassin. It was of the utmost importance that Booth should be taken alive that the ramifications of the plot should be known.

In nothing they did and said at the time at the various trials was it shown that Conger and Baker were actuated by much else than consideration of the monetary reward. They seem to have had little thought and less care for the acclaim that would come to them as men who had satisfied the great public demand for a sacrifice for the death of the President, and nothing of the distinction which would follow as the avengers of Lincoln's death.

Differing from the regulars under them and who had little respect for them as detective-soldiers, Conger and Baker lacked nothing in the way of soldierly behavior. They paid no attention to the complaints of the men or to those of Sergeant Corbett of being too much exposed to a shot from Booth.

Convinced that Booth had committed suicide, as he intimated he would do rather than be taken prisoner, Conger was astounded by the claim of Sergeant

Corbett that it was he who had shot down Booth. Never doubting a denial, Conger inquired among the men if any of them had fired upon Booth. The alert brain of the fanatic Corbett saw the opportunity and seized it to make the claim. Unseen by Booth, because of the flames, Corbett was watching Booth's every movement. He probably saw Booth shoot himself. The moment Conger made the inquiry, Corbett saw there was a doubt in the commander's mind. If Corbett saw Booth kill himself, then no one else had killed him. Corbett felt safe in making the claim, as Booth, who was practically dead — the sergeant at the time thought him actually so — would scarcely dispute it. On being asked as a soldier how it was possible to do such a thing in defiance of orders, Corbett drew himself up to his full height, and, saluting, said:

'Colonel, Providence directed me.'

Corbett, who was a religious fanatic,[1] and was once drummed out of the army for breach of discipline thus gave the same reason for shooting Booth that Booth had given for shooting Lincoln. Shifting the responsibility for a crazy act to divine authority seems an orderly thing to disordered minds.

This reply of Corbett's amused Colonel Conger,

[1] Corbett was English by birth. He was brought up in this country and learned the trade of a hat finisher. While living in Boston, he joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. Never having been baptized, but after making it a subject of prayer he took the name of Boston, in honor of the place of his conversion. Herndon: *Life of Lincoln*, II, 286.

who regarded the 'eccentric sergeant' as a 'crank' capable of any strange expression or act. Humoring Corbett, Conger declared his intention to leave the matter in the hands of Providence — and the Secretary of War. Showing how little importance the colonel attached to Corbett's statement, Corbett was not even placed under arrest for disobeying orders. Two things in connection with him and his claim to have killed Booth are remarkable. He was never summoned to explain or excuse his disobedience, nor was his alleged act of firing on Booth ever corroborated by any of his companions. It will be recalled that later on he was confined in a lunatic asylum.

Conger did not believe Booth was shot by Corbett. 'He [Booth],' said Conger, 'had the appearance of a man who had put a pistol to his head and shot himself, shooting a little low.' At the time, it would have been easy for the Government to have verified or disproved the fact at the autopsy, but the autopsy was almost wholly confined to the identification of the corpse. It was reported that one barrel of the Booth revolver was empty, but it does not appear that the weapon with which Booth might have carried out his resolve never to be taken alive was ever examined.

Later, the rumor of suicide was abroad. The truth of the matter could have been established without difficulty. If Corbett fired the shot, some of his companions must have witnessed the act; in fact, he swears that one of them was watching him at the moment. Whether he used a carbine or a revolver, is left uncertain. He swears, 'I took

steady aim on my arm,' which looks like a revolver; Doherty [captain of the troop] says a carbine. . . . The autopsy ought to have disclosed the size of the ball and whether it came from a revolver or a carbine; and a proper inspection of the weapons — the one Corbett said he used and the one Baker took from the fallen man — would have settled the question.[1]

Secretary Stanton decided, for reasons that he felt sufficient, who he wished it to be believed had put an end to John Wilkes Booth. He decided on Boston Corbett. Stanton cared little who killed Booth so long as Booth was killed. He shared the great public demand for revenge upon the assassin, that he be blotted out of existence. Lincoln could not be brought back, but there was the mighty hunger of the people that punishment should be meted out to the perpetrator of the dastardly act. Stanton satisfied that hunger.

The one thing the great Secretary of War was determined upon was that no self-glorification should be attached to Booth's death. To admit that Booth took his own life and died a martyr to his country's cause was more than Stanton could stand and was not to be permitted for a moment. Such a thing would give the South cause to gloat, and that was not to be tolerated. Hence Boston Corbett, freed from examination of any kind except a casual talk upon the witness stand, subjected to no punishment for infraction of military discipline, was given by

[1] Dewitt: *Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, 279.

Stanton to the American public and to the world as the heroic figure of Lincoln's avenger. It was an unfortunate choice.

In kind, after the autopsy, was the swift and secret burial of Booth's remains, that no shred of his garments, no trinket, no personal belonging should be preserved as a trophy by those who had any sympathy with the South.[1]

As for Booth's diary, so unjustly withheld by Secretary Stanton, it may be that he 'just forgot about it.' Still, it was the only thing among Booth's effects brought to Stanton by Colonel Conger that the great War Secretary retained. With our present knowledge of Stanton, it seems likely that his intense loyalty and hatred of the enemies of the Union caused him to veil the contents of the diary that Booth might in no way be regarded by the South as a martyr-hero. Stanton's temperament was such that he could not endure, nor would he permit the least sign of exaltation or heroism for the cause of Secessionism.

Says the London *Times* of May 9, 1865: 'The S.S. Europa brings news of the death of Booth' — and adds this little fiction of its informant — 'who continued to curse the Government to the latest moment.' There was no such 'cursing of the Govern-

[1] At the Government autopsy, April, 1865, one of General Baker's men took on board the monitor where Booth lay, a young woman who had known Booth. She cut a lock of hair from the dead man's head, but Baker, acting upon Stanton's order not to permit Booth tokens or souvenirs of any kind, took the lock of hair from the young woman. (Baker: *History of Secret Service*, 507–08.)

ment,' nothing but the expressed determination on Booth's part not to be taken alive and, after he fell, the whispered message to his mother and his pleading to be killed. The *Times* also stated that Booth, 'however, found an interval in which to send a message to his mother.' If the concluding lines of the article ever came to Stanton's attention, they must have enraged that worthy gentleman: 'Such an end was too good for such a miscreant. . . . *He dies like a hero of a tragedy*, but with execrations on his tongue; still defying the judgment of human tribunals.'

There is something contradictory and unexplained about the manner of Booth's death. The most natural explanation, to the author of these lines, is that of suicide. Booth determined at first to rush out of the barn and confront the soldiers. He started to do so. With the flames back of him, and in front of him no egress but the barn door which he knew to be heavily guarded, he nevertheless determined to face the issue. He had gone but a few steps when he realized the drab hopelessness of it all, realized that there was no fighting chance of a battle or struggle such as would comport with the cause for which he was to surrender his life, for, while he would be exposed to the fire of the soldiers, they, in the darkness, would be invisible to him. Swiftly realizing, too, the possibility of *capture* instead of death, he determined to make an end of it all himself and did so.

CHAPTER XVII

IDENTIFICATION

From the moment John Wilkes Booth entered the box at Ford's Theater, shot the President, leaped to the stage, passed out of the rear door of the theater, mounted his horse and sped across the Anacostia Bridge, met Herold, and, with him, proceeded through lower Maryland into Virginia, where he met 'Willie' Jett, who conducted him to the Garrett home and was there introduced to the Garrett family as 'John W. Boyd,' a wounded Confederate soldier, and, heedful of the proximity of the Federal cavalry, would no longer sleep in the Garrett house, but instead went to the Garrett barn, where he was shot, or shot himself, rather than surrender, every moment of Booth's time, from the deed to his death, has been traced and accounted for.

He is the same man whom 'Jack' Garrett locked in the barn for fear he (Booth) would steal the horse, which he had tried in vain to buy from Garrett, and make off in the night. He is the same man whom 'Jack' Garrett, commanded by Conger and Baker, faced in the barn, or warehouse, with the demand to deliver up his arms and surrender. The same man who threatened to shoot Garrett if he did not get out — quickly. The same man who called out to Garrett

that he would put a bullet through him if he piled up any more brush against the barn. The same man Colonel Conger thought so strikingly like his brother Edwin as he stood in the light of the blazing building. 'I had seen John Wilkes Booth in Washington,' Conger testified at the Trial of the Conspirators, 'and recognized the man killed as the same.' The same man who shot himself rather than surrender, or was shot down as he was about to step from the barn for a duel to the death with the soldiers. It was the same man of whom Boston Corbett said: 'I had never seen Booth before, but from a remark made by my commanding officer, while on the boat going down to Belle Plain, that Booth's leg was broken, I felt sure that it was Booth that I fired at: for when the men in the barn were summoned to surrender, the reply of the one who spoke was that his leg was broken and that he was alone. I knew also from his desperate language that he would not be taken alive, and such remarks, that it was Booth, for I believe *no other man would act in such a way*.' [1]

The same man who was dragged bleeding and unconscious from the burning warehouse. The same man who, reviving, told Conger, Baker, and Miss Holloway, the Garrett sister-in-law who bathed Booth's temples, that they were to tell his mother that he died for his country, and that he did what he thought was for the best. The same man who pleaded to be shot that his agony and his anguish might be

[1] Pittman: *Trial of the Conspirators*, 94.

ended. The same man who, with Jett standing near, asked, 'Did that man [Jett] betray me?'

The same man with the initials 'J. W. B.' pricked into his hand in India ink.[1] The same man who died on the Garrett porch in the presence of Baker, the soldiers, and the Garrett family, died as the light of another day was growing stronger. The same man who was pronounced dead by Dr. Urquhart. The same man whose body was sewed up in Lieutenant Baker's blanket and conveyed by him to the steamboat and then transferred to a gunboat and thus transported to Washington.

There seems no possibility of the chance that Booth eluded his captors, no chance of any one, even if he had been fool enough to wish to do such a thing unprotestingly, purposely, or accidentally stepping in to be shot instead of Booth; yet that is precisely the claim that is being made — that Booth left the Garrett house the night previous to the arrival of the soldiers in search of him; that he sent one 'Ruddy' back for articles lost, and that 'Ruddy' was shot, or shot himself, rather than yield. One would feel like giving three loud and ringing cheers for this 'Ruddy' if, in a burst of patriotic exaltation, he had stepped in and allowed himself to be sacrificed for the man who had struck a blow for his, 'Ruddy's,' Southland and effected that man's escape. It would prove this 'Ruddy' to be a brave if mistaken patriot. But no such escape was possible. No such escape was made,

[1] Oldroyd: *Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, 80.

and the 'Ruddy' here spoken of was proved to be alive many years after his alleged death in the Virginia barn.

There has grown up around the death of John Wilkes Booth, as often around the death of other celebrated criminals, an untenable story of escape, and, in the case of Booth, pursued by the spirit of Lincoln and, worn down by years of inexorable remorse, an absurd tale of ultimate death by self-destruction through poison.

How did this story come into existence? What was the origin of the rumor which, spreading, robbed a part of the nation of the supreme satisfaction that Lincoln's assassin had been punished? We have now reached a stage where careful students of history have been taken to task by college professors for not knowing that Booth escaped, and at least one prominent churchman has lectured to thousands of people maintaining that Booth went free. How did such a rumor rise?

The answer seems to be — sensational journalism. According to Colonel Clarence F. Cobb,[1] there was published at Washington, D.C., during the Civil War, a journal called *The Constitutional Union*, edited by Thomas B. Florence. This paper was vituperative in its opposition to Lincoln and his administration.

After Booth's body was brought to Washington from the Garrett barn in Virginia, *The Constitutional*

[1] *New York Dramatic Mirror*, February 26, 1916. Jas. W. Shettel: 'John Wilkes Booth at School.'

Union published a statement that Booth had escaped and that the body brought in by the cavalry and the detectives was not Booth's. The only warrant for such a statement was that the bloodless, emaciated body of the great offender, who in a starving condition had been hunted through fields and swamps, was in startling contrast to the brilliantly handsome young tragedian whom Washington was accustomed to gaze upon as the *beau idéal* of elegance and fashion.

At that early moment, it was not possible for editor Florence to have information or knowledge on which to base such a statement, but, running true to its yellow streak, the statement was sent forth by the journal. Sure of its men and the facts, the Government has never paid any attention to this unfounded rumor which has reached such unworthy proportions.

The Colonel Clarence F. Cobb mentioned was a boarding-school companion of Booth's. He and Booth had kept up their friendship. Booth had hailed Colonel Cobb in front of Humphries's livery stable and talked with him on Good Friday, April 14, 1865, the day of the assassination. Paymaster Benjamin Price sent Colonel Cobb to help identify the body of Booth. Surgeon-General Barnes told Cobb that it was unnecessary; that he, Barnes, and nine others had fully identified the body; that the well-known Washington dentist, Dr. Merrill, had filled two of Booth's teeth; that Booth's mouth had been forced open and the fillings fully identified by Dr. Merrill, so that the identification of the body had been complete.

The present writer had never paid much attention to this dental recognition until the fact came to light that but a few days had elapsed from the time Dr. Merrill had done the work for Booth and was then called upon by the Government to identify that work. We may be sure that Dr. Merrill's identification of his own handiwork, which had been done so recently, would be positive and indisputable, particularly as it had been done on the mouth of so handsome and so popular a theatrical idol as John Wilkes Booth.

It is not surprising that people should want to share in the fame of others, but it astonishes to learn that there are people so rabid of public attention that they are not only willing but insistent upon sharing other people's infamy.

There are certain types of authors, too, with alert minds and facile pens who seem to revel in the attempt to abort the evident. There is classic, entertaining, if not convincing literature to the effect that though the Christ existed, He escaped crucifixion; that though the poet Shelley wrought in verse, he was never drowned; and despite the fact, as we know, that Napoleon was born in Corsica, became Emperor of France, died a prisoner at St. Helena, and is buried in the Hôtel des Invalides, he never really lived.

Long after Oscar Wilde had been dead, there were reputable travelers who, returning from the Continent, insisted that while in Paris they had seen and talked with the author of 'Lady Windermere's Fan.'

Some years ago, in one of our prominent magazines,

there appeared an essay by Eugene Angert on Mark Twain. Angert jestingly endeavored to prove that the author of 'Innocents Abroad' and 'Tom Sawyer' was a myth.

It is not remarkable then that around so celebrated a case as the assassination of Abraham Lincoln there should have arisen — perhaps will continue to arise — legends of more or less interest, depending upon the plausibility of their telling.

If the Government authorities, rejoicing with the populace in the extinction of Lincoln's assassin, were remiss or did not think it necessary at the official autopsy to show the particular manner by which Booth came by his death, they did prove irrefutably that Booth was Booth; that he died as narrated, on the porch of the Garrett farm, and that the body of that individual which the Government officials, the relatives of the deceased, surgeons, Booth's fellow actors, etc., examined and identified was once animated and directed by that gifted and extremely alert young tragedian, John Wilkes Booth.

It has always interested the present writer to remember that the great tragic actress, Charlotte Cushman, was inadvertently the cause of the indubitable identification of the body of John Wilkes Booth, and that this came about through an embrace given by her to Booth in the course of a play. Though Booth no doubt had cautioned Miss Cushman to be careful when she embraced him in the play, when the time came Charlotte Cushman, who was a very realistic

actress, forgot everything except the emotional intensity the scene demanded. By that forgetfulness she so marked John Wilkes Booth that there can never be any real question as to the absolute recognition of his body.

If Miss Cushman was the unwilling cause of setting that seal upon her fellow player, it was unquestionably 'positive and scientific identification' of that mark by the eminent surgeon, Dr. John Frederick May, which set at rest for all time all doubt on the subject. Not only doubt, but a great deal of controversy has entered into the matter, as is known.

Fortunately we have the remarkable paper which that distinguished surgeon and scholar, Dr. May, has written upon this very subject of the identification of Booth's body. This paper, written many years previously, was first read before the Columbia Society of Washington, D.C., on February 9, 1909 — three days before the centennial of Lincoln's birth. Other than in the records of the Society, Dr. May's invaluable contribution to the subject has never been published in its entirety, though from time to time copious extracts have been made from it. He tells us of the difficulty of identification of the human body after death has overtaken it, and touches upon the historical cases of the claimant in the Tichborne trial, of the Duke of Monmouth who was said to be the Man in the Iron Mask, etc.; but what concerns us most in Dr. May's recital is his meeting with Booth and the important result of that meeting.

DR. JOHN FREDERICK MAY
One of those who identified Booth's body

Identification

Some time before the assassination of President Lincoln [says the doctor], a fashionably dressed and remarkably handsome young man, accompanied by a friend, entered my office in Washington and introduced himself to me as Mr. Booth. After some ordinary conversation, he told me that he was playing an engagement with Miss Charlotte Cushman and was much annoyed by a large lump on the back of his neck, which for some time past had been gradually increasing in size and had begun to show above the collar line of the ordinary theatrical costume. He said that he wished to have it removed; and he particularly enjoined me to say (if questioned upon the fact of his having undergone a surgical operation) that 'it was for the removal of a bullet from his neck.' But he did not give me any reason for the request.

Without promising to observe this injunction, I examined his neck and found, on the back of it and rather on the left side, quite a large fibroid tumor, but which could have no connection with a bullet, as to its origin, or in any other way. I advised its removal, but at the same time told him I would take it out on one condition, which was that he should suspend his engagement at the theater and observe absolute rest.

He replied that he did not wish to do this; in fact, he could not. I then explained to him the importance of his remaining quiet after such an operation, upon the ground of his personal appearance; that there were two principal ways by which a wound made by a surgical operation healed: the first, and most to be desired, by primary adhesion, by which, if the edges were brought closely together and kept in contact for some little time, they became directly united and left so fine a line of cicatrix as scarcely to be noticed. But that this bond of union, though daily becoming stronger, was weak for some days after the adhesion and could easily be broken by undue violence;

and if once broken, the wound would gape and its edges not be likely to reunite, and then the space between them would have to fill up with new tissue or flesh, and an ugly scar would be left.

After quietly listening to this explanation, he told me in a very decided way that he could not stop playing his engagement, but would be very careful in acting and moderate his movements so as to make no strain upon the wound.

I saw that it was necessary to humor him, for there was so much determination in his manner as to convince me that he had decided to have the offending object at once removed and, whatever might be the result, he would himself become responsible for it. Compromising with him on that basis, I removed it. The wound perfectly united by the primary or direct process, and I congratulated him on the slight scar that would be left. But in about a week after it had united, he came one morning to my office with the wound torn open and widely gaping, and told me that, in some part of the piece he was playing with Miss Cushman, she had to embrace him and that she did so with so much force and so roughly that the wound opened under her grasp. The indirect and tedious course of healing by granulation followed and left *a large and ugly scar.*

Why I have been thus particular in giving the details of this conversation with Booth the sequel will show.

I had never seen him before this professional interview, and I never saw him again after he left my care until I was called on by Government detectives to examine his dead body, brought to the Navy Yard at Washington, and there seen on a steamer in the river.

After the death of Booth, strong doubt existed whether the body brought to the Navy Yard at Washington was that of the man who had assassinated the President. In fact, it was openly asserted that it was not his body. Probably in consequence of this, a commission of high function-

aries of the Government was formed to obtain evidence as to its identification, and I received a summons to appear before it. As I was very busily, and as I thought, more usefully engaged in rendering services to the living, than in examining the bodies of the dead, as no authority for the summons was shown, I did not respond to it. But in a short time a second and more peremptory message came, directing me to appear before the commission and, as at that time the *inter arma silent leges* power was in full force, I deemed it most prudent to obey. I therefore started for the Navy Yard with my son, then a mere lad and now a practicing physician in this city. On my way a third messenger was met on his way to my house, who was no less than the chief of the detective corps, the noted Colonel Baker.

He returned, conducted me on board the steamer and ushered me into the cabin where the commissioners were in session and by whom, notwithstanding my contumacy, I was very politely received. I was then told that it had been stated to them I had removed a tumor from the neck of Booth, and they wished to know if I could identify the body; and to go on deck and examine it thoroughly and make my report.

The body was on deck, completely concealed by a tarpaulin cover, and Sergeant-General Barnes and his assistants standing near it. By his order the cover was removed, and to my great astonishment revealed a body in whose lineaments there was to me no resemblance to the man I had known in life! My surprise was so great that I at once said to General Barnes, 'There is no resemblance in that corpse to Booth, nor can I believe it to be that of him.'

After looking at it for a few moments, I asked, 'Is there a scar upon the back of its neck?' He replied, 'There is.' I then said, 'If that *is* the body of Booth, let me describe the scar before it is seen by me'; and did so as to its posi-

tion, its size and its general appearance, so accurately as to cause him to say, 'You have described the scar as well as if you were looking at it; and it looks, as you have described it, more like the cicatrix of a burn than that made by a surgical operation.'

The body being turned, the back of the neck was examined and my *mark* was unmistakably found by me upon it. And it being afterwards, by my request, placed in a sitting position, standing, and looking down upon it, I was finally enabled to imperfectly recognize the features of Booth. But never in a human being had a greater change taken place, from the man whom I had seen in the vigor of life and health, than in that of the haggard corpse which was before me, with its yellow and discolored skin, its unkempt and matted hair, and its whole facial expression sunken and sharpened by the exposure and starvation it had undergone.

The right lower limb was greatly contused, and perfectly black from a fracture of one of the long bones of the leg. An autopsy was then made by the assistants of General Barnes, which proved that the bullet which killed him passed between two of the vertebræ of the neck, causing their fracture and lesion of the spinal cord.

The body was secretly, and at night, buried in the yard of the penitentiary; which was not generally known for some time afterwards.

I have thus given an account of the cause which led to the positive identification of the body of Booth. The details, as I have related them, are still as vivid in my memory as at the time of their occurrence, for they are inseparably connected with a deed which brought sorrow and mourning to every house and hamlet in the land, and which produced a shock and sorrow that extended not only to the limits of our country, but whose vibrations were felt throughout the civilization of the world.

Identification

That great uncertainty was felt and that much doubt was expressed at the time of the death of Booth, and long afterwards, as to the identity of his body is notorious. Nor need this create surprise, for although the circumstances connected with his capture all tended to corroborate the belief that he had been killed, yet from the body which was produced by the captors nearly every vestige of resemblance of the living man had disappeared. But the mark made by the scalpel during life remained indelible in death, and settled beyond all question at the time, and all cavil in the future, the identity of the man who had assassinated the President.

CHAPTER XVIII

MISS HOLLOWAY

With comment by the present writer, this chapter is made up of a letter, hitherto unpublished in full, written by Miss L. K. B. Holloway. She was the sister-in-law of Richard H. Garrett in whose barn Booth was taken and on the porch of whose house Booth died. Miss Holloway was an eye-witness to the death of Booth, to whom in his dying moments she gave many tender attentions. Her paper is a quaint and not unimportant contribution.

The letter was written long after the events which Miss Holloway describes took place, when she was advanced in years. It is published through the courtesy of Miss Susan B. Harrison, House Regent of the Confederate Museum, Richmond, Virginia, where the original letter may be seen. It may be mentioned that the Confederate Museum was the so-called White House of the South, the official residence of the Confederate President, Jefferson Davis. He declined this beautiful old house as a gift from the Confederacy. Shortly after the fall of Richmond, it was to this White House of the South that Lincoln went and, crossing his long legs, swayed himself in the Davis rocking-chair.

Miss Holloway entitled her letter:

Miss Holloway

THE CAPTURE AND DEATH OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH

BY AN EYE-WITNESS

The war had been over several weeks. A number of days had passed since the tragedy in Washington had been enacted. The assassin had made good his escape from the Capital and his whereabouts were unknown; but as yet the intelligence of the calamity had failed to reach a large portion of Eastern Virginia.

Such was the condition of affairs when on Monday, April 24th, 1865, at about half-past noon, a boat containing five men crossed over from Port Conway to Port Royal, Virginia, two villages on the Rappahannock River, opposite to each other.

Three of the men proved to be men by the name of William Rollins, Mr. Green and a colored man named Richard Wilson, but the other two were total strangers.

Immediately upon landing, one of the unknown men inquired of the bystanders for a Confederate officer. No sooner was inquiry made known than a young man named William Jett, dressed in a Confederate Captain's uniform, introduced himself as Captain of Mosby's Command. (Jett was a boy of only eighteen years of age and had never been in the war.) His curiosity was such as to prompt him to tell a falsehood to find out why they wished to see an officer.

Whereupon the strangers engaged him in close conversation for several minutes, after which, being joined by his companion, he said to him in the presence of the pretended officer, 'I have told this officer who we are and what we have done.'

To which his companion replied: 'Ah, indeed! I didn't intend to tell anybody that.'

The three men conversed quite earnestly for some time, after which young Jett, leading the way, they all left the

village in company with two Confederate officers; Lieutenant Bainbridge and Ruggles following.

The search leading in the direction of Bowling Green, one of the unknown men — the one who had inquired for the officer at Port Royal — was left, while the rest of the men rode on to the house.

On arriving they were met by Mr. Richard H. Garrett, who was the owner of the house. Upon which Jett addressed him saying, 'This is Mr. Garrett, I presume?' and on securing an affirmative answer, introduced to him this second unknown as his friend John William Boyd, 'a Confederate soldier who had been wounded in the battles around Richmond, near Petersburg.' At the same time he requested Mr. Garrett to take care of him until Wednesday morning at which time he would call for him. Complying with this request, Mr. Garrett consented to receive him.

By this time it was about three o'clock in the afternoon, so taking leave, Jett and the officers returned to the gate where the stranger (who was none other than Harold, one of the Conspirators) was awaiting them.

How far Harold was conveyed, or how far the two Lieutenants accompanied Jett, is not known. It has been conjectured, however, that Jett was concealed somewhere along the road, and that Jett, leaving the officers, proceeded on to Ashland, a telegraph office, where he had sent intelligence to the authorities at Washington as to the whereabouts of the two men, and then, retracing his steps, recovered Harold and conveyed him to the house of Mrs. Clark in the neighborhood of Bowling Green, where they spent the night. Harold was also taken to Mr. Garrett's, where he remained until Wednesday.

In the mean time, Mr. Garrett had extended to his strange guest all the hospitalities of his house. Everything had passed off quietly. Nothing of consequence had oc-

curred until Tuesday at dinner time when Jack Garrett, the eldest son, returned from Port Royal and reported the news of President Lincoln's death.

While at dinner the tragic event was commented upon, as to the motive which prompted the deed and its effect upon the public welfare. All this time Boyd remained silent, but upon hearing one of the daughters remark that she supposed that the perpetrator had been paid, he turned to her with a smile and said:

'Do you think so, Miss? By whom do you suppose he was paid?'

'Oh,' she replied, 'I suppose by both the North and the South.'

'It is my opinion,' rejoined he, 'he wasn't paid a cent, but did it for notoriety's sake.'

Soon after, they arose from the table, and as he started out Mrs. Garrett (my sister) asked if he would like to have his wound dressed. He replied by saying that it did not give him the slightest pain. Then thanked her, and with several others went out on the porch commanding full view of the public road and sat down upon the steps.

They had been sitting there for some time when Bainbridge, Jett, and Harold rode up to the gate. Harold was seen to dismount from behind Jett and begin walking towards the house, while Bainbridge and Jett rode on. It was then that Boyd asked Jack Garrett to go upstairs and get his revolver. When asked why he wanted it, he said he always felt safe when armed.

Then he was asked who was approaching, to which he replied:

'Oh, that is one of our men.'

'What do you mean?' asked Jack.

'Why, one of those who crossed over with us,' he said; and walking off, he met Harold about midway between the gate and the house, where they remained in close conversa-

tion for fully half an hour, after which they both came to the house.

Not long afterwards Jett and Bainbridge rode up hurriedly to the house to see, as Jett professed, how his friend Boyd was getting along; at the same time telling them that he and Harold had better make good their escape, for he had understood that the Federal troops were crossing over from Port Conway to Port Royal. They then galloped off, *Jett going in the direction of Port Royal to meet, as it is conjectured, the troops who were coming in answer to his telegraphic summons.*

About an hour before sundown the Federal troops were seen dashing along the road in the direction of Bowling Green. While they were passing, Boyd and Harold hid themselves in the thickets which were some distance from the house, and did not emerge until they had passed. Then upon being asked why they, ex-Confederate soldiers, should hide themselves from these now that the war was over, Boyd replied that he did not care about meeting with any of them.

Failing to comprehend the action of these two men, Jack Garrett resolved to institute some investigation. Upon inquiry he learned that the Federal troops were in pursuit of two Confederate soldiers, one of whom was wounded, and the description they gave corresponded exactly with those of the two men at home. So returning home he asked Boyd if they had gotten into trouble; saying: 'You know what you have done. Now, if you have gotten into any difficulty, you must leave at once for I do not want you to bring any trouble upon my aged father.'

To which Boyd replied that they had gotten into a little brush over in Maryland, but it was all over.

In the evening as they were sitting on the porch, Boyd requested Jack Garrett to take him up to Guinea's Station that night, offering him ten dollars. When asked why he

wanted to go there, he said that he had heard that there was a Confederate Maryland battery near Louisa Court House which hadn't disbanded and if he could reach that he would be safe.

Jack told him he could not take him that evening, but would do so the next morning, giving as his reason that he had only one horse. Being refused, he agreed to be taken the next morning, and gave him ten dollars in advance.

When the hour came to retire, Boyd saw no place in which he could be made comfortable. He [said] replied that anywhere would do rather than go upstairs.

Then he and Harold were conducted to a large tobacco house in which was stored away a lot of valuable furniture belonging to the people of Port Royal, covered with hay and other provender.

After they had entered, Jack Garrett locked the door and took the key to the house and gave it to me, saying he would leave it in my care and that I must not let any one have it, as it was his opinion that they intended trying to steal their horses and escape. Then, assuring themselves, he and his brother Willie went out into a shed opposite the tobacco house to spend the night.

About two o'clock the next morning (Wednesday) the family was aroused by the loud barking of dogs, the clanking of arms, and the heavy tread of sentinels pacing up and down the porch. Soon it was discovered that a sentinel had been placed at every door and window and that the whole yard was full of soldiers.

All at once there was heard a rush for the porch at the end of the house, followed by a violent battering against the door, with frequent demands that it be opened. Hearing the racket, Mr. Garrett arose, partially dressed himself, and hastened to the door to inquire the cause of the tumult.

Instantly he was seized and asked what he meant by

harboring Booth, the murderer of their President. He answered that he was not harboring the murderer of their President. Upon which, notwithstanding the entreaties of his wife and little two-year-old daughter, he was taken by force from the house half-clad and threatened with handcuffs and the rope and a pistol placed at his breast.

[He] was carried into the yard and set upon a block where he remained until eight o'clock in the morning with two soldiers guarding, thereby contracting a severe cold from which he never recovered. Again and again he was importuned with threats of hanging to disclose the whereabouts of Booth, the murderer of their President. Again and again did he profess his ignorance.

Colonel Conger, Lieutenant Baker, the detectives, and Waters, a New York reporter, had come to arrest Booth. Then it dawned upon him (Garrett) that this Boyd must be Booth, and also that these men must have been directed by Jett, who, when brought forward in the morning and accused by Mr. Garrett of piloting the soldiers and of deliberately bringing that trouble upon him, made no reply, but hung his head.

At this juncture of affairs, Jack Garrett came up from the shed and, perceiving his father's perplexity, said: — 'Gentlemen, if you want to know where those men are, I will take you to the place. They didn't sleep in the house to-night, but are in an outhouse.'

At once they compelled him to pile lightwood around the building. Then he was sent in after Booth, who warned him not to come in any more, and said to those without: 'Who are you and what do you come for?' The reply was: 'We want you, we came for you!'

Booth answered: 'Then prepare a stretcher, for I will never surrender!'

Jack said: 'There are nearly fifty armed men, and escape is impossible. Act like a man and surrender.'

'The word surrender is not in my vocabulary. I have never learned the meaning of that. There is one here, however, who will surrender.'

Then Jack was sent in after Harold, who was brought out and placed under guard. The lightwood being set on fire, Booth called out: 'Now I can pick off eighteen of you before I stop, but I have accomplished all that I want to.'

At once the fire was put out. Again Booth cried out: 'Give me fifteen steps and I will make good my escape.'

The rejoinder was: 'No! we will not give you any.'

Then Booth said: 'I want you to take notice of one thing. The gentleman with whom I am stopping knows not who I am, nor what I have done.'

After this a lighted torch was thrown into the barn, which soon set fire to the hay and other combustibles, making a great conflagration.

Then, taking advantage of the light within and the darkness without, Sergeant Corbett placed his revolver through a crack and shot Booth, the ball passing through the jugular vein and taking in one of the cervical vertebra.

As soon as it was discovered that Booth had been shot, Jack Garrett was sent in to bring him out. Then he was carried to the house by four men and laid upon the front porch, to all appearance dead.

At once a mattress upon which to place him was asked for. But he said: 'No, no, let me die here! Let me die here!'

Then one of the officers ejaculated, 'The damn Rebel is still living!' and immediately dispatched a messenger for Dr. Urquhart of Port Royal. A pillow was asked for and I brought it and placed it under his head. Wine was offered, but he refused it: then water was presented, but he wouldn't drink it.

Presently he protruded his tongue. I took my handker-

chief and dipped it in water and moistened his lips; he said:

'Tell my mother I died for my country. I did what I I thought to be the best.'

I again moistened his lips and he repeated the message to his mother. Soon he gasped, and I again moistened his lips and tongue a third time and the pulsations in his temples grew weaker and weaker.

It was then Lieutenant Baker asked me to rub his temples and forehead. I did so. The end was near. Then, gasping three times and crossing his hands upon his breasts, he died just as the day was breaking and the doctor was reaching the house.

A stray curl that had fallen over my fingers while I had soaked the dying man's temples was cut off by Dr. Urquhart and given to me. A portion of this curl I have in my possession now.

About eight o'clock that morning, the body of Booth was sewed up in a U.S. Army blanket belonging to Lieutenant Baker and together with Harold and the Garrett boys was conveyed to Washington.

After all had left and the family had become a little composed, I went to the bookcase to get some books for the children, as I was teaching school in the family at the time.

The first thing that greeted my eyes were the opera glasses. I knew they did not belong to any of the family. I concluded they must be Booth's, so I took them to Mr. Garrett and asked him what I must do with them. He replied by saying: 'Take them out of my sight. I do not wish to see anything that will remind me of this dreadful [affair.']

I told him I would send them up to my mother's in a day or two. I took a pin and marked 'J. W. B.' under the buckle on the strap. And during the day my brother

[came] to Mr. Garrett's and [I] gave them to him to take up to my mother, thinking they were too valuable to be destroyed as Mr. Garrett had directed me to do.

The next evening Lieutenant Baker, in company with Jack Garrett, came to Mr. Garrett's in pursuit of them. They did not know really that they were there, but simply supposed that Booth had them and thought they might be there. Lieutenant Baker asked Mr. Garrett if they were not, and without any hesitancy he told him I had them.

He then came to me and asked where they were. I very reluctantly told him where they were. Lieutenant Baker and Jack Garrett went up to my mother's, which was about eight miles, and got them. They came back to Mr. Garrett's about four o'clock in the evening, and spent the night and returned to Washington the next day.

Such was the close of the eventful career of John Wilkes Booth on the morning of April 26, 1865, a career that was luminous with frequent flashes of brilliant genius, but whose final splendor was obscured by its misdirection.

(Signed) Miss L. K. B. Holloway
Bowling Green, Caroline County, Virginia

This is a true copy:
Susan B. Harrison
House Regent Confederate Museum
Richmond, Virginia

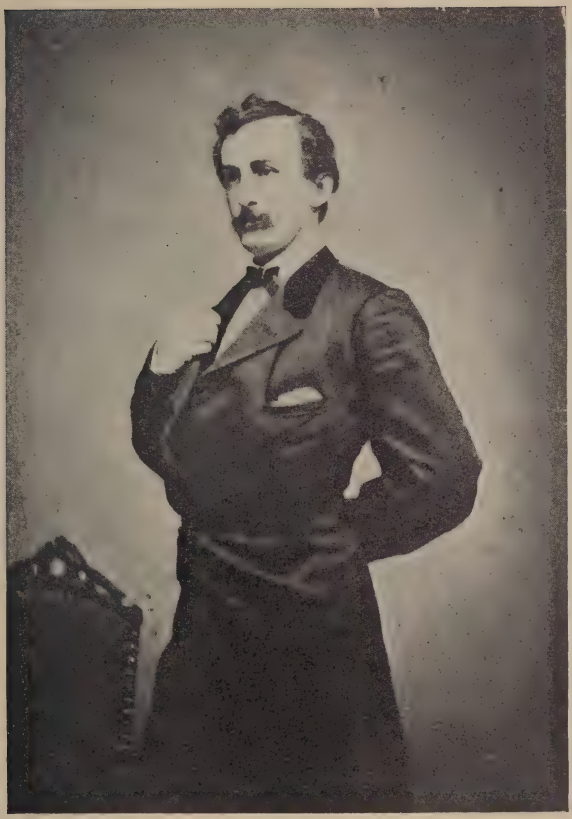
The above unaffectedly simple and extremely interesting account of the capture and final moments of John Wilkes Booth does not differ widely, except in forgivable instances, from that by Colonel Conger, Lieutenant L. C. Baker, and others who were witnesses of the final catastrophe which overwhelmed the assassin.

Miss Holloway does not fail to give full —surely too

full — credit to her nephew 'Jack' Garrett, whom, in her account, she has sent into the barn to bring out Booth after he was shot, or shot himself. The Spartan behavior, too, she attributes to her brother-in-law, the elder Garrett, is scarcely borne out by other evidence. The old gentleman was frightened almost into incoherence until rescued by his son Jack, who divulged the hiding-place of Booth and Herold, whom Miss Holloway persists in calling 'Harold.'

Her explanation of the recovery of the glasses differs from that of Baker. Nor is she, according to Conger, Lieutenant Baker, and Captain Doherty, accurate in stating that Jack Garrett went into the tobacco house and brought out Herold. As ordered, Herold stuck his hands through the half-open doorway and was jerked into the night and into captivity by Baker and turned over to Captain Doherty, who handcuffed him and placed him under guard. After young Garrett was sent in by the officers to secure, if possible, the arms and surrender of Booth and Herold, he found Booth so menacing that nothing could have induced him to make another visit to the inside of that warehouse.

Interesting, indeed, is the discussion at dinner of the assassination, and of Booth's comment on it and his part in it that, in his opinion, the assassin did not receive a penny, and committed the deed 'for notoriety's sake.' This was said in reply to one of the Garrett girls that she supposed the perpetrator was well paid by both the North and the South. It is still more



JOHN WILKES BOOTH

interesting as showing the general knowledge which prevailed even in remote districts of the South of the unpopularity of Lincoln, especially in his own party, the Republican. It was mostly the plain people who loved Lincoln, who believed in him, and who mourned him.

The villain of the tragedy to Miss Holloway, and to the Garrett family, is 'Willie' Jett. He undid the Garrett household by bringing the Federal posse at an unholy hour of the night in search of 'the murderer of our President.' It was of no importance and no grief at all to the dyed-in-the-wool Southerner Garrett, whose son 'Jack' had just returned from fighting against the invasion of the South, that Lincoln had been assassinated, but that he, Richard H. Garrett, the patriarch of his family and his tribe, should have been aroused in the middle of the night and, 'half-clad,' seized and forced to stand for hours on a block, exposed to the chill of an early April morning, was an unforgivable indignity.

He did not realize that that band of twenty-five cavalrymen were but a link in a chain of vengeance stretching out to encircle the slayer of a nation's idol — always an idol to a few, but now a newly discovered one to many, and for that reason all the more wildly worshiped.

To the constricted mind and experience of the Garretts, Jett was easily the arch-traitor of the whole plot, especially after the dying culprit had asked if it were not Jett who had betrayed him. Had not Jett

brought Booth to the Garrett home and presented him under the assumed name of 'Boyd'? Was he not, then, the cause of all their trouble? Poor Jett, who, in a playful moment, pretending to be an officer just to hear Herold's story, got entangled in a web of unhappy circumstances, was the unwilling means of leading the scouting party of soldiers directly to the object of its search and thus deeply harrowing the otherwise peaceful lives of an easy-going Southern family.

Miss Holloway's 'conjectures' about Jett's complicity appear to be all wrong. So far from 'telegraphing the authorities at Washington' and thus bringing down the soldiers upon Booth at the Garretts', Jett seems to have had neither the inclination nor sufficient initiative for such a stroke. The Garretts could not have realized that, once Jett was seized by the soldiers and threatened with imprisonment for aiding and abetting a great crime, he had really no choice. Any other course than the one he pursued might lead to the scaffold. Jett was loyal enough. By Miss Holloway's own statement, Jett, on the approach of the Federal cavalry, had warned Booth and Herold to make good their escape.

Through this letter we are told for the first time what objective point Booth had in mind when he escaped from Washington. He could not go to Richmond, his elected destination during the days of the plot to abduct the President; that city was now in the hands of United States soldiers. His plan then was

to reach the Confederate army, any Confederate army, still in the field. Now, Miss Holloway tells us, he felt he would be safe if he could get to Guinea's Station, but ten miles away. At Louisa Court House there was a Confederate battery from his own State of Maryland. This battery of soldiers had refused to surrender. If he could reach those unyielding Confederates and either elude capture or go down fighting with the Marylanders for his beloved South, then John Wilkes Booth would be contented to the last fiber of his fanatically romantic being.

How single-minded, how protectively loyal to her family Miss Holloway is when she has it that Booth declares that the elder Garrett was innocent of the whole affair and was not aware of what he, Booth, had done! This remark of Booth's in the barn applied, of course, to Herold whom he was trying to shield and not at all to Garrett.

Miss Holloway verifies Booth's words as to the reason for his atrocious act — that he did what he thought was for the best — for the South. As a matter of fact, it was the very worst thing he could have done at the time for the South. The lady omits to say that Booth made the same remark to Conger, Lieutenant Baker, and the others. Probably she was not aware of it.

She was sympathetically attentive to the wounded actor. The moment Booth's identity was revealed, he became a vital object of interest to her as the man who, mistakenly or not, had struck a blow for the

South, her South. With millions of others, she had read of his romantic life, of his beauty of person, now so wan and bedraggled, of his attractiveness to women, and with her own eyes and ears had she not witnessed his tender thought of his mother? Some of his fascination for women seems to have clung to him even in his last moments to be felt by this odd little Southern school teacher. She had the doctor (Dr. Urquhart) cut off a curl from Booth's head, 'a stray curl,' she tells us, 'that had fallen over my fingers' as she bathed the dying man's temples.

Many years later as she was writing the account of the scene of which she was an eye-witness, she did not fail to set down the fact that she still had a portion of that curl in her possession. Naïve, tender, quaint, loyal Miss Holloway!

CHAPTER XIX

JOHN WILKES BOOTH'S DOUBLE

In the biographical sketch which preceded Dr. May's essay, 'The Mark of the Scapel,' William Henry Dennis, among much other interesting material, says that the question of the identity of John Wilkes Booth is 'still actively debated, and only about a year ago, in 1908, a book was published purporting to be written by a Tennessee lawyer, named Finis L. Bates, solemnly arguing that Booth was alive until 1903, when he committed suicide in Enid, Oklahoma, where he was known as David E. George.'

The gist of Bates's book is this: That a man named John St. Helen, later David E. George, confessed, as John St. Helen, to Bates [1] that he was not John St. Helen, but in reality John Wilkes Booth. He declared that he had eluded the vigilance of thousands of soldiers and many detectives, but, struck with remorse for the horrible deed he had committed, he must make confession to some one to ease his mind. He was much in the position of the gentleman of ancient fable, one King Midas, who had ass's ears, and, unable to keep a certain secret, whispered it to the grass. When the wind blew, the grass broadcast the secret to the world. St. Helen did much of his own broadcasting, for, when not sufficiently observed to please his vanity, he had a way of asking people if

[1] Finis L. Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 33.

they ever noted his resemblance to John Wilkes Booth.

Bates saw instantly, of course, that, if there were truth in St. Helen's confession, St. Helen's body was a valuable piece of property. Bates was a shrewd man and a lawyer. He had but to convince the United States Government that St. Helen's story was authentic and to deliver St. Helen to the authorities to obtain the rich reward offered for the capture of Booth.

It mattered nothing to Bates that on good and sufficient evidence the Government was convinced that Booth was not only captured, but dead and buried. Bent on the determination to prove the Government wrong and Bates right, the Memphis attorney became positively ingenious in weaving the threads of his tale and bending circumstances, dates, and persons to his purpose. At the time of writing his book, he does not seem to have been aware — or he ignored the fact — of the awards already paid by the Government to the Bakers, Colonel Conger, Lieutenant Doherty, and the cavalrymen, among whom was Boston Corbett, for the capture of Booth. If, dead or alive, Bates could produce the body of John Wilkes Booth, then he would be entitled to the reward offered by the United States Government for Lincoln's assassin. It did not concern Bates at all to whom the Government had mistakenly paid any previous rewards as Bates reasoned. He would, of course, be obliged to go through the formality of proving the Government all wrong and Bates all right. In other

words, that his claim was valid. This he found impossible.

Believing that his story was in the right shape and tracing the man St. Helen (the supposed Booth) first to Leadville and then to Fresno, Bates approached the Government authorities at Washington, asking the Secretary of War 'if it would be of any importance to develop the fact to the War Department of the United States that John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln, had not been captured and shot by the Federal troops, as was supposed.' [1] He added that by accident he had been placed in possession of facts in the matter that were conclusive, and that he had withheld them from the public until he had communicated with the War Department.

The whole subject, judging from the various official endorsements on Bates's letter, which was returned to him, seems to have been thoroughly considered, and the Government, satisfied with the results of its exhaustive autopsy at the time of Booth's death, especially with the expert evidence of Dr. John Frederick May, further endorsed on the Bates letter this recommendation, signed by the Judge-Advocate-General, G. Norma Lieber: 'It is recommended that he [Finis L. Bates] be informed that the matter is of no importance to the War Department.' [2]

That the Judge-Advocate-General, considering Bates's communication, should find it of 'No impor-

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 210.

[2] *Ibid.*, 212.

tance,' distressed Bates. As a result, he suggests that the Judge-Advocate-General and the other officials who seconded the finding ('snubbed it' would be a truer term) 'are guilty of assisting, by concealment, the escape of John Wilkes Booth.' [1]

Dissatisfied with his reception at the War Department, Bates next addressed himself to the Department of State. It cannot be truthfully said that his efforts there met with enthusiastic encouragement, judging from the nature of the reply he received to his letter:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

April 27, 1900

Finis L. Bates
DEAR SIR:

The Secretary of State requests me to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 24th of April and to thank you for it.

(Signed) E. J. BABCOCK
Private Secretary

Brief, and distinctly to the point. It is to be seriously doubted that Bates ever realized the ironical humor of that letter. 'This closed my efforts,' he says, 'of presenting the matter of Booth's discovery to the United States Government.' And well it might. He had tried hard to set the Government right. Like the twelfth juror in a murder trial, and who had been the only one to vote for acquittal, Bates felt that he had never seen eleven more stubborn men.

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 218.

He continued to believe 'this finding of the officials unexplainable in view of Secretary Stanton's order — the offer of $100,000 reward for the arrest of Booth and his accomplices — an order,' Bates declared, 'to be yet valid and subsisting.'

The three or four persons upon whom Bates, in his book, relies as incontrovertible witnesses as to the truth of his story are a nephew of Booth, Junius Brutus Booth, 3d, General Albert Pike, and Joseph Jefferson. The nephew was not born until three years after the death of his uncle, John Wilkes Booth. It must have been difficult for him, with any degree of certainty, to identify his uncle from a 'tintype' taken of that supposed uncle twelve years after the uncle's death, especially an uncle he had never seen. It scarcely seems credible that this nephew, with such evidence as Bates could present to him, even impressed as the nephew was by the resemblance in the 'tintype' to members of his family, should 'wring his hands in grief and excitement,' and exclaim, as Bates says he did, 'Was my father's confidence in me a lie, and did he indeed die with the secret that my uncle still lived untold on his lips?' This young Junius Brutus Booth (who died some years ago in England) gave Bates a 'Voluntary Statement of Identification' consisting of nothing but a list of the names of his family and the information that he traced 'a strong family resemblance and likeness to different members of my family in the said tintype.' [1]

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 307.

The most to be extracted from the recognition of Booth by the soldier-poet, General Albert Pike, is that, drinking with some friends in a bar-room at Fort Worth, Texas, the General was suddenly struck by the resemblance of a man named John St. Helen to Booth and exclaimed:

'My God, John Wilkes Booth!'

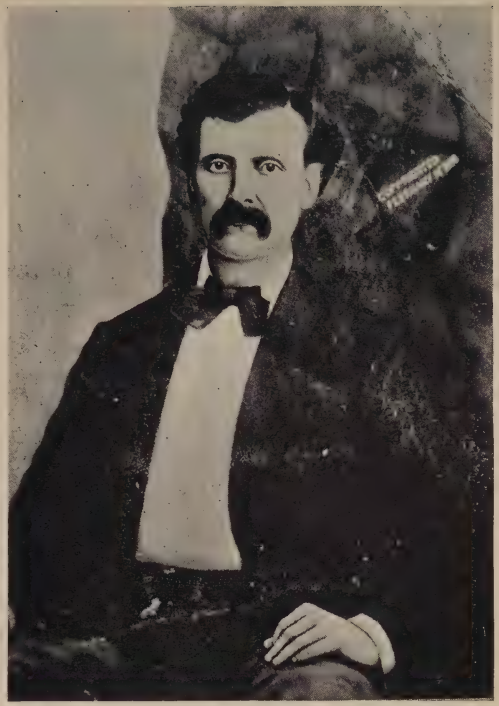
The General is said to have 'trembled like an aspen,' and, at the suggestion of a friend, went upstairs to bed. It is not stated that General Pike was assisted upstairs after his face had gone 'white as his hair and beard,' but it is a little singular that the General did not speak to Booth, whom he had known in life, and that the amazing impression of the evening previous was gone after a night's sleep, for we hear no more of the matter from General Pike, the soldier-poet.

Bates's star witness, however, is Joseph Jefferson. This was an attractive name to juggle with, and Bates does not fail to make the most of it. Jefferson was to appear in Memphis, the Bates home town. He telegraphed the celebrated comedian at Nashville asking for an interview when he should arrive at Memphis, the day following. Jefferson, who was a courteous gentleman, complied. Bates believed, correctly, that 'if any living man would recognize John Wilkes Booth from a tintype picture of John St. Helen (given to Bates by St. Helen), that man would be Joseph Jefferson.' [1]

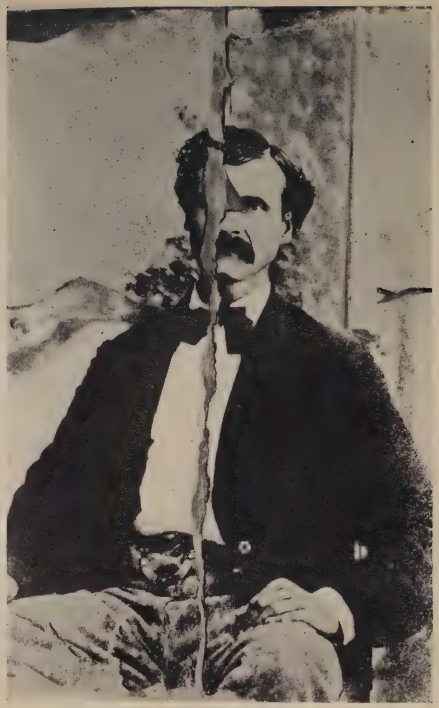
[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 300.

THE TINTYPES OF JOHN ST. HELEN AND DAVID E. GEORGE

These pictures, which were used as illustrations in Finis L. Bates's *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, show clearly their relation to each other and also show clearly that they are not independent tintypes of the same man taken at different times. The lower part of the George picture is evidently a tintype or photograph of a real man, whom we may assume to be David E. George, but the head and the coat, and necktie are so evidently painted on that one can feel no confidence in their genuineness. Then when we turn to the picture that is said to be a tintype of St. Helen taken some years earlier, it is very plain that it is entirely a fake made up from the George tintype. The necktie is precisely the same, and the left hand as it rests on the thigh is a poor copy of the genuine hand in the other picture, being in exactly the same position but evidently drawn by a very incompetent draftsman. Many of the portraits in Bates's book, indeed, are very evidently faked. One of Booth, for instance, is plainly drawn from the carte-de-visite photograph of Booth with a cane a copy of which is reproduced at Page 276 of this book, though Bates supplied him with a dark cravat instead of a light one and altered the face to look more like George than did the original. All this 'retouching' is, indeed, so clumsily done that it seems strange that it should have deceived anybody. Bates, for one thing, seems to have forgotten that tintypes are negatives and show left for right and right for left, for in reproducing Booth's fashion of dressing his hair he puts the parting on the right instead of on the left as Booth did, though copying the original very exactly in other respects.



JOHN ST. HELEN



DAVID E. GEORGE

They met at the Gayoso Hotel, Memphis, April 14, 1903. 'Just thirty-eight years to the day,' says Bates, 'from the assassination of President Lincoln.' No doubt the expectation, the hopes of Bates ran high as to that interview. This is what came of it:

When Jefferson was handed that tintype picture he looked at it carefully and said: 'This is John Wilkes Booth — if John Wilkes Booth was living when this picture was taken.' [1] Which cannot be said to be an auspicious beginning of the interview for Bates. This remark of Jefferson's was eminently characteristic of the man. It recalls instantly the reluctant recommendation Jefferson gave to an employee who was leaving his services. Jefferson had been saddled with the man for years and had been too tender-hearted to dismiss him. He did not wish to offend the man but felt that he must be fair to the new employer. So he wrote:

To Whom It May Concern: This is a good man for anybody who wants this kind of a man.

JOSEPH JEFFERSON

So, in the same vein he says to Bates, in words that affirm his belief that Booth is not alive: 'This is John Wilkes Booth — if John Wilkes Booth was living when this picture was taken.' In situations where a nice balance of neutrality was needed, Joseph Jefferson was masterful. He knew what Bates hoped from the interview the moment Bates handed him the

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 302.

tintype, and, following the principle of his life, if the comedian could not agree, he would not unpleasantly disagree.

Then Bates unwound and told Jefferson it was a picture taken of Booth 'twelve years after the assassination.' If Bates wanted to believe that, and he evidently did, it was all right so far as Jefferson was concerned. Far be it from him to voice any objection. He had his own opinion, and the thing to do was to humor this designing gentleman who was his guest. He was at Bates's mercy. There was little else for Jefferson to do but to listen and go on gazing at the tintype, which he did. Finally, according to Bates, he said placatingly: 'This, I should say, is a picture of John Wilkes Booth, but he is older than when I saw him last.' This was a safe remark in that Bates had just told him the picture was taken twelve years after Jefferson believed Booth had been killed.

If Jefferson had really thought Wilkes Booth had escaped, he would have been filled with wonder and astonishment. He would have plied Bates with many rapid-fire questions not a syllable of which, we may be sure, would have escaped Lawyer Bates. We may be surer that they would not have escaped being recorded in the Bates book, perhaps with embellishments.

No man was closer to the Booths than Joseph Jefferson. He knew John Wilkes Booth from infancy. He had appeared on the same stage with him. He was, besides, Edwin Booth's dearest friend and confidant.

In later life, he succeeded Adam Badeau to that distinction. Edwin Booth made long visits to the Jefferson home, 'Crows' Nest,' at Buzzard's Bay. Together the two men threshed out considerations of Spiritualism in which Jefferson was more than passingly interested.

As is shown in the Bates book, Jefferson took no more than a polite interest in what Bates had to disclose. 'As a matter of history,' says Bates, 'I deem it my duty to say that I was impressed with the idea that Mr. Jefferson was by no means surprised to see a picture of John Wilkes Booth at the age of thirty-eight [Booth was twenty-seven when he died] *and gave expression to no more surprise* than to ask, "Where did you get it?"' [1]

The strong likelihood is that Jefferson was bored. The poor man often was by people who from one weak excuse or another would manage to filch his precious mornings, even his afternoons. Far from being a star witness to the truth of the Bates contention, Jefferson, as it seems to the present writer, is so much of a boomerang that the wonder is Bates cited him.

Most fortunately, Jefferson has left behind him a letter which expresses absolutely his attitude toward Bates and Bates's belief that John Wilkes Booth was never caught and punished at the hands of the United States Government. Moreover, Jefferson's letter is not in accord with Bates's statement. In 1903, the

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 303.

Secretary of the Tennessee Valley Historical Society was Oliver D. Street. In answer to a letter he wrote Jefferson, the distinguished comedian replied as follows:

BUZZARD'S BAY, MASS., *June* 10, 1903

Mr. Oliver D. Street

DEAR SIR:

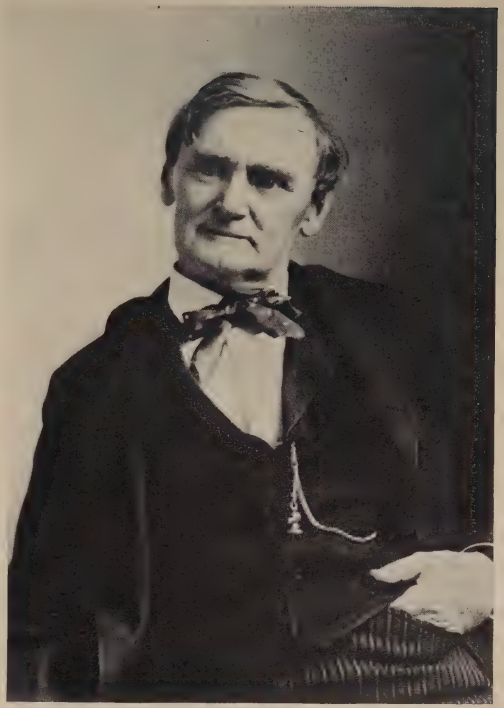
In reply to your enquiry I beg to say that a gentleman [1] called on me last spring and related to me his story contained in your letter. He showed me also a tintype much disfigured and asked me if I did not recognize it as John Wilkes Booth. I told him that it bore a kind of resemblance to him, but that I had not seen Booth since he was nineteen years old, and as the tintype was evidently that of a man of fifty-five or sixty it was quite impossible for me to give him any satisfactory information on the subject — and this is what he calls my 'identification of Booth's remains' — rather weak evidence for such an important case — and I do not think that Clara Morris (who also denies the identification) has any further testimony beyond the uncertain tintype.

The gentleman further stated that he was trying to obtain the evidence so that he could get possession of the dead man's estate for his client.[2] My opinion is that there is not the slightest foundation for the truth of this rambling story.

Sincerely yours
(Signed) J. JEFFERSON

[1] Jefferson was so little impressed that he did not recall Bates's name.

[2] Nobody knew better than Bates that 'the dead man' had no estate, and that it was because nobody, after a long time, had come forward to claim even the body, that it was given to Bates, who kept it for years in the garage of his house at Memphis, Tennessee.



JOSEPH JEFFERSON

CLARA MORRIS

It is pertinent and not a little amusing at this point to quote from the preface of Bates's book:

> Among the personal acquaintances of John Wilkes Booth none would know him better than Mr. Jefferson, who was most closely associated with him for several years, both playing together on the same stage. *I know of no man whose knowledge of Booth is more to be trusted, or whose words of identification will carry more weight to the world at large.*

This would seem to prove that Joseph Jefferson, notwithstanding Bates's declaration to the contrary, scarcely listened 'with interest and approval' to what Finis L. Bates had to say on the escape and suicide of John Wilkes Booth.

It may be noted that Bates, in handing Jefferson the 'much-disfigured tintype,' tried to make Jefferson commit himself. He asked if Jefferson did not recognize the tintype as that of John Wilkes Booth. It may also be noted, according to Jefferson's letter, that Jefferson was not to be betrayed into endorsing Bates's 'rambling story.'

The reference to Clara Morris's 'testimony' sent the present writer on a hunt for that 'testimony.' It was found in Birmingham, Alabama, in the possession of the same gentleman, Mr. Street, who had obtained Jefferson's opinion of the Bates theory of Booth's escape. A copy of the 'testimony' was courteously furnished. It follows:

John Wilkes Booth

Mr. Oliver D. Street, Secy.

Dear Sir:

In answer to yours of June 6th relating to J. Wilkes Booth, I am desired to write for my wife [Clara Morris], who is slowly convalescing, that she is no believer in the story of Booth's substitution and of his only recent death.

At the time of the appearance of the last article in 'Lincoln's Life' by Col. John Hay, in the Century Magazine, I remember we were in Boston, and on a Sunday afternoon I read to Madam the part wherein Col. Hay makes severe mention again of the assassin. Madam was quite worked up about it, and the editor of the Boston Herald happening to call, she expressed herself as hurt. The editor got her to give him an article for the Monday's paper, wherein she told of her acquaintance with Mr. Wilkes Booth, of her having played but a few weeks before the assassination with him in the 'Marble Heart' in Cleveland, of his sanity then and of his courtesy and kindness to all, which was natural with him always. There came quite a flood of telegrams to her for her courage and her sincerity and among them one from Edwin Booth saying, 'My heartfelt thanks, Clara. I am so glad it was for you to say the first word of compassion for John Wilkes.'

When Madam's book appeared ['Life on the Stage'], wherein she gave a chapter to Wilkes Booth, a party from the South wrote to her saying that he knew that Booth was alive and that she was the only one he would impart his whereabouts to. That he would be in New York on a certain day and would like to call on her. I answered his note by saying that the audience would be given, but no one appeared and there the matter rested to be disinterred recently.

There are two actors here in New York that saw the body, and one cut a lock of hair from Booth's head that

he had promised to Clara Morris. These men I have confidence in, and we take no stock in the occasional sensations pertaining to David George or others.

Respectfully
F. C. Harriott

Riverdale on the Hudson
June 11, 1903

Some idea may be had of the state of the public mind concerning Booth and the assassination when nearly forty years later it was considered a courageous act for Clara Morris to say a compassionate word in Booth's behalf. One can also readily imagine how grateful was Edwin Booth for a merciful, sympathetic allusion to the erring John Wilkes whom he knew as an affectionate brother — even though at times temperamental and visionary.

Reference has already been made to Clara Morris's experience in acting with Booth and her graphic description of him. 'The party from the South' who 'knew that Booth was alive' was unquestionably Finis L. Bates, at this time busy with plans to deliver the body of his 'friend' St. Helen (Booth) over to the Government — for the trifling consideration of $100,000.

There are in the Bates book many things that are not only spiritually unconvincing, but easily controvertible. He tells, for instance, of an Edwin L. Delfind, whoever that was, who says he was speaking with Edwin Booth at The Players, one day, and remarked to him: '"Mr. Booth, there is an incident in

the nation's history to which I would like to allude." He promptly comprehended, and replied with flashing eye and compressed lips:

'"You mean that affair at Washington. I could not approve of what John Wilkes did, and I would rather not discuss it. He is my brother."'

This has every internal evidence of an unveracious story. Edwin Booth would not have vouchsafed a reply. Before the speaker had finished his first sentence, Booth would have withered him with a look of scorn, and strode away. No one ever presumed to speak to Edwin Booth of his brother John, except the most intimate of friends, and never these, unless Edwin Booth first broached the subject. Out of respect to the sensitiveness of Edwin on the subject, actors like Harry Hawk and W. J. Ferguson never publicly spoke of the matter until after Edwin Booth's death. This was a mistake. Those who knew less of it, garbled it. Before or after the assassination, his brother John was known to him as 'John' or 'Johnnie.' Never as 'John Wilkes' or 'Wilkes.' Edwin's telegram to Clara Morris probably did not say 'John Wilkes.' In answer to an inquiry, Edwin Booth's daughter (May 14, 1927), sent to the present writer the following:

'My dear father so rarely spoke of his unfortunate brother J. W. B., and whenever he mentioned him it was as "*John*" — with pity — and fraternal affection.'

So, too, Clara Morris has this: 'Now it is scarcely

an exaggeration to say the sex was in love with John Booth, the name Wilkes being apparently unknown to his family and close friends.'[1]

In a recent letter to the writer, his cousin, Blanche de Bar Booth, says: 'I shall always remember "John" as we called him as a very lovable boy,' etc.

Bates quotes this Edwin L. Delfind as a somebody of authority and importance. The writer could find no trace of such a person in or out of the dramatic ranks.

'These extensive quotations,' says Bates at page 202 of his book, 'are made from the two veterans of the stage Clara Morris and Edwin L. Delfind, the personal friends of John Wilkes Booth whose long acquaintance and association with him enabled them to write these articles showing the characteristics, personal appearance, and ability of John Wilkes Booth.'

No 'long acquaintance' was at all necessary to show these qualities, and as testing Bates's accuracy of statement, it should be known as a fact that Clara Morris was neither a personal friend nor a long acquaintance of Booth's. She was a minor member of John Ellsler's stock company in Cleveland, Ohio, and played the 'Player Queen' to his 'Hamlet,' and one of three Statues to his 'Raphael' in 'The Marble Heart.' Hers were comparatively insignificant rôles, indeed, and her 'long acquaintance' and 'personal friendship' was comprised within the space of a week

[1] Clara Morris: *Life on the Stage*, 99.

or two, exactly the time of Booth's engagement at the Cleveland theater. She was a woman of mind and later on became a remarkably fine impersonator of emotional characters. Because of the awful deed committed by Booth shortly after their brief association, the man, his characteristics, his ability, his beauty became, naturally, deeply impressed upon her. She lamented his wasted genius.

In another place Bates asks: 'How is it that Baker, on his second visit [to the Garrett farm] found Booth's opera or field glasses hidden near the Garrett home? It is evidence of two things: First, that Booth had been out from the Garrett home, as he was when notified by Ruggles and Bainbridge to go to the wooded spot near the Garrett house and wait for them, where they would come for him (which Booth said he did), and this is how and why the glasses were found, as Baker says, "hidden near the Garrett home," lost or dropped by Booth.' [1]

So far as can be discovered, Baker does not say anything of the kind.[2] Mark how a plain and unvarnished tale disposes of Bates's statement. After the excitement, hunting for some schoolbooks to resume her teaching of the Garrett children, Miss

[1] *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 158–59.

[2] See his testimony at the Surratt Trial, 1867. He was not called upon to testify at the Trial of the Conspirators, 1865. His was the first testimony taken down of the capture and death of Booth. Judge Holt took it direct from Baker on the gunboat, the day Booth died. This testimony mysteriously disappeared. Baker attributed this disappearance to a scheme to favor Colonel Conger and Lieutenant Doherty in the governmental rewards made for the capture of Booth.

Holloway (aunt to the Garrett children), searching in a bookcase, came upon the field glasses belonging to Booth. These were the same glasses that Booth had requested Mrs. Surratt to carry to Surrattsville and leave with the tavern-keeper Lloyd. The fact that Mrs. Surratt complied with this request weighed heavily against her at the Trial of the Conspirators.

Miss Holloway showed the glasses to the elder Garrett and was told to take them out of his sight. He wanted no reminder of the dreadful experience he had undergone. Miss Holloway, as we have seen by her paper, took the glasses and sent them, by her brother, to her mother's, eight miles away.

Lieutenant Baker tells how he stumbled upon the clue to these glasses. Sent a second time to the Garretts' to look for the glasses and for any other articles belonging to Booth, he was rummaging around in the ashes of the barn (which Bates denies ever existed) thinking to find a lens or a rim of the article in question. The six-year-old son of the Garretts was playing about. Baker questioned him and got the surprising reply that Booth had given the field glasses to the boy's sister, Joanna. Baker then astonished old Garrett with the knowledge of the existence of the glasses and demanded them. The truth came out. They must give up the glasses or go back to Washington with Baker. The threat was sufficient. Baker and 'Jack' Garrett rode the eight miles, sixteen altogether, and got the glasses.

This quite disposes of the Bates yarn that the

glasses were found 'hidden near the Garrett home.' Bates would have it believed that these glasses were 'lost or dropped by Booth near the secluded hiding-place in the woods,' the hiding-place, he declares, where the Confederate soldiers, Bainbridge and Ruggles, met Booth and spirited him away to safety, the night previous to the capture in the burning barn.

Another of the Bates contentions is that if the Government had been satisfied that the body delivered by Baker was that of John Wilkes Booth, he dares say 'it would have been placed on public exhibition rather than have been held in the secret manner in which it was.' It was precisely because the Government was convinced that the body was that of John Wilkes Booth that it was not so exhibited. There was no necessity for a public identification — which would undoubtedly have led to a public riot.

It was also because the Government believed, erroneously, that the assassination of Lincoln was a great conspiracy instigated by the leaders of the Southern Confederacy, and that Booth was merely a tool to work the will of Jefferson Davis *et al.*, that Booth's body, after absolute identification, was quietly disposed of. Secretary Stanton controlled and directed the whole situation. He had undergone a long and fearful mental strain with his difficult duties as Secretary of War. His sense of justice, his unbounded patriotism had been so outraged by the death of the President whom he had come to revere, that it is no wonder he could see no color but red. He

was determined in nothing so much as that no sympathizer of the South — and Washington was overrun with them — should have an opportunity to gloat over the remains of Booth or to secure a trophy to flaunt in remembrance of the President's assassin.

But the wildest, merriest of all the contentions of Bates is the one dedicated to the astounding proposition that Andrew Johnson, seventeenth President of the United States, incited John Wilkes Booth to murder Abraham Lincoln; that Booth, realizing that Lee's surrender practically ended the war of the Rebellion, 'and left nothing we could do but accept defeat and leave the South, whom we had made our best efforts to serve, to her fate, bitter and disappointing as it was,' was halted by Andrew Johnson, who turned to him and 'in an excited voice and apparent anger' said: 'Will you falter at this supreme moment?'

Booth, who was at a loss to understand him, stood silent, 'when with pale face, fixed eyes, and quivering lips,' says the Booth of Bates, 'Mr. Johnson asked of me: "Are you too faint-hearted to kill him?"' [1]

To this decidedly daring question, up speaks the Booth of Bates and says, says he:

'As God is my judge, this was the first suggestion of the dastardly deed of taking the life of President Lincoln, and came as a shock to me.'

There is no doubt that such a suggestion from the Vice-President of the United States would come as a

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 42.

shock to almost anybody. And, further, there is strong reason to doubt that Andrew Johnson and John Wilkes Booth ever met. On Booth raising certain important objections to Johnson's idea, continues Bates, and declaring that killing Lincoln would mean certain death to the culprit, that the difficulties of escape would be insuperable, etc., etc., Andrew Johnson declared to Booth that all difficulties would be removed, and that he, Johnson, would arrange for Booth's escape. He added that 'on the death of Lincoln he, Vice-President Johnson, would become President of the United States, and in that official capacity, I could depend upon him,' says the Booth of Bates, 'for protection and absolute pardon.'

'Under these conditions and assurances,' says Booth, as reported by Bates, 'I will dare strike the blow for the helpless, vanquished Southland whose people I love.' [1]

All of which, in the light of what we now know are the facts, is a great deal of balderdash for Mr. Bates, or any other individual to have dared to utter, let alone print. It is a falsification of the facts of Booth's connection with the assassination. Furthermore, it is a villainous falsification of the character of Andrew Johnson, who, with all his many faults, was a loyal Unionist.

We know that not long before the curtain rose on the performance of 'Our American Cousin,' witnessing which Lincoln was to die, the fanatic, the madman

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 43.

Booth was feverishly trying to terrorize George E. Atzerodt into the assassination of Andrew Johnson. Atzerodt confessed the fact, the confession being read at the Trial of the Conspirators. Therefore, asking the public to believe, as Bates does, that Andrew Johnson was a party to the plan for his own assassination is asking a little bit too much.

Why this effort on the part of Bates to involve Johnson? Johnson was a Southerner, the military governor of Tennessee. He kept the State from seceding from the Union. The South could neither understand nor forgive a Southerner who did not believe in secession. Bates was also a Southerner, a citizen of Memphis, Tennessee.

Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, deplored the assassination of Lincoln. He did say, though, on first learning of it, 'If it were to be done at all, it were better that it were well done: and if the same had been done to Andy Johnson, the beast, and to Secretary Stanton, the job would then be complete.' [1]

No complicity of any kind in the assassination of Lincoln could be proved against Jefferson Davis.[2] After two years' imprisonment in Fortress Monroe,

[1] Pittman: *Trial of the Conspirators*, Lewis F. Bates's testimony, 46–47.

[2] When Thaddeus Stevens, the most radical of Republicans, was shown the testimony against Davis and other Confederate officials, he declared it would not hold: 'These men are no friends of mine; I know these men and I tell you they are incapable of being assassins.' (Rhodes: *History of the United States*, v, 504.)

Virginia, he was freed. Later, all his civic rights were restored, except that of holding office.

Whatever may have been Davis's natural antipathy toward Stanton as the relentless enemy of secession, no doubt his (Davis's) attitude toward Johnson, who was loyally opposed to disunion, was strongly emphasized by Johnson's speech made April 5, 1865. Johnson, speaking of Davis, said: 'Yes, I say, hang him! Hang him!'

In the same speech Johnson advocated treating the Southern leaders as traitors whose property should be confiscated. Bates, along with all Southerners, feared property confiscation. This, together with the suggestion of reprisals in blood, were in violent contrast to the humane policy of Abraham Lincoln.

Having submitted the alleged 'identifications' of John Wilkes Booth by the nephew of Booth, Junius Brutus Booth, and Joseph Jefferson, 'the veteran actor and world-renowned "Rip Van Winkle," supplemented by the evidence contained in this book,' Bates ends the recital of his story with:

I announce it as a physical fact [a much employed phrase of his which he also puts into the mouth of his pseudo-Booth, or which he may have learned from him] that John Wilkes Booth was not killed on the 26th day of April, 1865, at the Garrett home in Virginia, but that he escaped, spent a roving life in exile, principally in the western part of America [no word about a ten-year sojourn in Europe to which the David E. George Booth 'confessed' to Mrs. Harper], died by his own hand, a

suicide, at Enid, Oklahoma Territory, on the morning of the *14th* day of January, 1903.

It is a well-substantiated fact, of which Finis L. Bates was aware, that the death he speaks of occurred on the 13th day of January, 1903, and that the Enid papers, as early as 6.30 A.M., on the 13th, carried notices of that death. By publishing in his book the statement and affidavit of Mrs. E. C. Harper, Bates himself verifies the fact that David E. George, the so-called Booth, died on January 13th:

ENID, OKLAHOMA TERRITORY
January 23, 1903

On the evening of January 13th I was startled and surprised by reading in the Enid *Daily News* of the suicide of David E. George, of El Reno. . . . I went to the morgue with Mr. Harper on the 15th and identified the corpse of David E. George as the man who had confessed to me at El Reno [in 1900] that he was John Wilkes Booth, etc.

(Signed) MRS. E. C. HARPER[1]

Moreover, the Enid *Daily Wave* of January 13th (1903) printed the account of George's death as occurring on that day. 'It is not often, even in these days of journalistic enterprise, that a newspaper actually reports all the details of a man's suicide, his removal to the morgue, and the impaneling of a coroner's jury over him the day before he dies.'[2]

Penniman, the undertaker at Enid, declared that George died on the morning of the 13th, and Dr. R. A.

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 241.

[2] F. L. Black, in *The Dearborn Independent*, April 25, 1925.

Field who attended George till he died, made an affidavit to the same effect. Lee Boyd, who lived at the same hotel (Grand Avenue) as George, attested under oath that he was the first to go to the assistance of George, whom he heard groaning and whom he found in convulsions. He sent immediately for Dr. Field, who 'came within five minutes'; that 'George did not speak, only groaned with pain'; and, before Dr. Field 'could prepare a hypodermic, Mr. George was dead.' Boyd swore that there was no 'confession' made at this time by George that he was Booth.[1]

Despite all these affidavits from various people who were present, despite the fact that Bates was in Tennessee and wholly unaware that there was any such person as David E. George out in Oklahoma Territory who had committed suicide by taking poison, the date of George's death is altered in Bates's book to the 14th and the astounding assertion made that almost at the moment of his death George declared himself to be John Wilkes Booth.

Why should this alteration be made and such a 'confession' put into the mouth of a poor old creature who, after overfeeding himself with strychnine, had only just time to groan and die?

George did tell a Mrs. Harper in 1900 that he was John Wilkes Booth — other 'cranks' made the same claim; but if there could be an actual deathbed 'confession' to that effect from George and George, some-

[1] F. L. Black, in *The Dearborn Independent*, April 25, 1925.

how, be proved to be the same man St. Helen, who had claimed in Texas to be Booth, Bates's demand for the reward from the Government would be greatly strengthened. Bates claimed that St. Helen and George were the same man. Bates went so far as to request the undertaker Penniman to comb the corpse's hair in the same way that Booth wore his — so Penniman, who 'had no use' for Bates, declared.

But Bates did more. When he arrived on the scene at Enid, he got an affidavit as to the death of George. Then something strange happened to that affidavit. There later appeared on it statements that were not there when it was originally made, the most important of which was: '*George declaring on his deathbed that he was John Wilkes Booth.*' All this as cleverly detected and pointed out by *The Dearborn Independent's* ingenious sleuth, F. L. Black, who, comparing by photostatic copies of various papers, showed the interlineations or additions to have been made *over* the seal, after the statements had been made. Black added, as the result of his painstaking discoveries:

> George did not make a deathbed 'confession.' George was not St. Helen. Even St. Helen's alleged confession has no affidavits nor written statements to substantiate a single word of it, sources are not given, statements are misquoted, affidavits altered, and historical honesty absolutely ignored.[1]

[1] *The Dearborn Independent*, April, 1925, wherein the overwritten document is shown.

CHAPTER XX

THE JOHN WILKES BOOTH MYTH

History is full of mistaken identities. So is everyday life. The case of the Tichborne claimant is perhaps the most famous. A page could be given of similar cases. People become 'set' as to the truth of something they think they have discovered. Many of them resent its being disproved.

All over America John Wilkes Booths have been discovered to be alive long after the death and burial of the real John Wilkes Booth in 1865. The Reverend Dr. J. G. Armstrong, of Atlanta, Georgia, was an instance. He bore a superficial resemblance to Booth and enjoyed being taken for him. He was actually believed by many to be Booth, so great is the craving to have something to shake one's head over. The dramatic quality of Armstrong's readings in and out of the pulpit fostered the idea of identity. The Reverend Dr. Armstrong liked the attention, the notoriety this resemblance brought — and took little or no pains to discourage the myth. It was even said that he purposely wore his hair long to conceal an ugly scar on the back of the neck, a scar which was made on the actual John Wilkes Booth by the scalpel of Dr. John Frederick May, Washington's noted surgeon. It was also said that on first seeing Dr. Armstrong some person exclaimed, 'As I live, John Wilkes Booth!'

The John Wilkes Booth Myth

The rumor still persisting that he was the President's assassin, the *New York Herald* investigated the matter thoroughly. On April 26, 1903, it published the result of its search. It showed conclusively 'that the Reverend Dr. Armstrong lived in the western part of Ohio at the same time John Wilkes Booth was living in Baltimore and Washington.'

It is, however, the Finis L. Bates story, 'The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth,' which not only gives color and strength to the yarn of Booth's escape, but misleads abler writers than Bates when, fascinated with the subject, they come upon his book. It is said that over seventy thousand copies of it have been sold, mostly in the South. Its claims are so bold and astonishing that they challenge attention and provoke interest. People who read it 'feel they have made a discovery in concealed history.'

There is no concealment whatever about the matter, as he who runs may read, if he will only read as he runs. The 'Trial of the Conspirators,' procurable in many libraries — and in the second-hand bookstores — tells the true story, taken down in court under oath from eye-witnesses and participants in the tragic history.

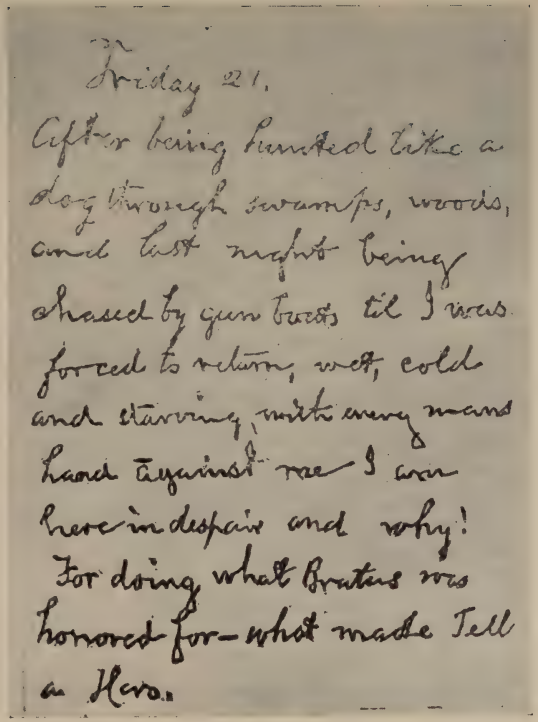
The diary of Booth — a brief thing — is often quoted, or given in full, in the many books on the subject. They are the last words of the actor-zealot written when he was but hours from his dramatic death, at a time when there was no incentive to falsify.

Booth's letter to the Washington *National Intelligencer*, handed for delivery to his fellow actor John Matthews about four o'clock on the afternoon of the assassination, had the following as its peroration, as sworn to by Matthews:

> The moment has at length arrived when my plans must be changed. The world may censure me for what I am about to do: but I am sure posterity will justify me.
> (Signed)
> Men who love their country better than Gold or Life
> John Wilkes Booth, Payne, Atzerodt, and Herold

There are other books, such as the 'Impeachment Trial of Andrew Johnson' and the 'Trial of John H. Surratt,' and, too, there are always the 'Official Records' of the Government, printed copies of which may be found in public libraries, which may be consulted as authoritative and convincing, but the book and papers above referred to are quite sufficient to smash the Bates contention of Booth's escape.

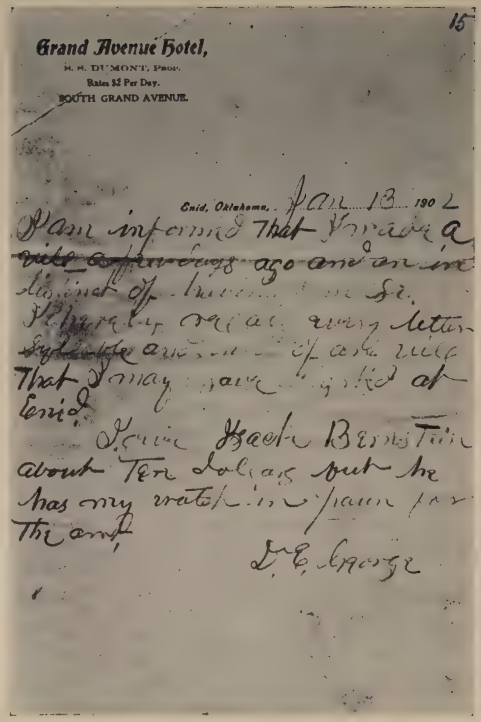
If, on a promise of protection from Andrew Johnson, Booth had been induced by Johnson to slay Abraham Lincoln, as Bates absurdly declares in his book, it is inconceivable that the impetuous, sadly disillusioned Booth, on the brink of eternity, would not, in his last communication to the world, have exposed and flayed Johnson for his perfidy. As a matter of fact, Booth breathed no word, written or spoken, of such a dastardly accusation. If it had been all arranged and agreed that Johnson should shield Booth from punishment, why, as is the testified fact, should



Friday 21.

After being hunted like a dog through swamps, woods, and last night being chased by gun boats til I was forced to return, wet, cold and starving, with every mans hand against me I am here in despair and why! For doing what Brutus was honored for—what made Tell a Hero.

A PAGE FROM BOOTH'S DIARY
Compare with George's handwriting



15

Grand Avenue Hotel,
S. S. DUMONT, Prop.
Rates $2 Per Day.
SOUTH GRAND AVENUE.

Enid, Oklahoma. Jan 13 1902

I am informed That Wade a
visit a few days ago and on in
[illegible] of [illegible] St.
Edwards [illegible] read every letter
[illegible] and [illegible] of ask me
That I may have [illegible] at
Enid.

I saw Hack Bernstein
about Ten Dollars but he
has my watch in pawn for
the amt

D E George

A SIGNED STATEMENT BY DAVID E. GEORGE
The 1902 of the date was a mistake for 1903

Booth a few hours later be trying to force Atzerodt into a plot to murder Johnson? It has been shown that at about the time Bates, through the 'confession' of St. Helen (the spurious Booth) declares Vice-President Johnson and Booth were in conference hatching their plot, Booth, Atzerodt, and Payne were planning the murder of Johnson. Booth was so sure of Atzerodt that he signed his name to the communication to the Washington *National Intelligencer*.

Johnson brought this accusation of complicity upon himself. Believing, as all official Washington did at the time, in a 'Great Conspiracy' on the part of Southern leaders to assassinate Lincoln — proved later to be ridiculously baseless — Johnson, in his proclamation of May 2, 1865, in accusing these leaders, included the name of that fiery Southerner Beverly Tucker. In doing so Johnson caught a tartar. Tucker retorted by asking how the South could possibly profit by Lincoln's death. In showing that Johnson was the only one who could so profit, he dared to accuse Johnson of being *particeps criminis*. This was meat and drink to Johnson's enemies. The story grew, even figuring in the Johnson Impeachment Trial in 1867. There never was any real reason to question Johnson's loyalty to the Northern cause, and never any doubt of his being a maker of injudicious speeches. As Johnson's accusation with Tucker's reply concerned all Southerners, Bates, we may depend, knew of it and felt its reflection. At all events, we find the accusation against Johnson re-

peated in the 'confession' made to Bates by the man called St. Helen, claiming to be Booth.

St. Helen was 'a hardened man of the world, at least forty,' according to one who employed him, while Bates was 'just a young, green kid' lawyer in his teens. Bates had seen St. Helen through a legal tangle and the two became well acquainted. One day, believing his end to be near, the saloon-keeper, St. Helen, sent for Bates and astonished him with a remarkable confession:

'I am dying,' said St. Helen. 'My name is John Wilkes Booth and I am the assassin of Abraham Lincoln. Get a picture of myself from under the pillow. I leave it with you for my future identification. Notify my brother Edwin Booth of New York City.'[1]

Bates says he did not believe the 'confession' at the time, so took no notes. He did not reduce the 'confession' to writing until more than thirty years later, and then, it is to be feared, with considerable embellishment. There are no affidavits, no unimpeachable corroborations attached to this 'confession' which Bates says he received from the man named St. Helen. We have only Mr. Bates's statement in the matter.

However, St. Helen got well, and weeks later called at Bates's office and invited him to a walk 'in the open prairie,' and, seated upon some rocks there, St. Helen repeated his extraordinary 'confession' with a wealth of detail that amazed the young lawyer. St. Helen

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 30.

told of his reason for the murder of Lincoln, of his escape, and accounted for his time up to the moment of his recital of the 'confession' to Bates. Ignorant of these details, with scant, if any, knowledge of the testimony of the chief actors at the trial held at Washington a few weeks after the deed was committed, the young lawyer, Bates, drank in this story of the 'barroom desperado' as greedily as a hungry kitten laps up milk.

Bates may not have believed the 'confession' at first, but when he came to set it down, it is likely that his vivid imagination aided him to strengthen, or he thought it did, the weak parts in the story. He ultimately believed it so thoroughly that he thought it strong enough to present to the United States Government with the claim that Lincoln's murderer had escaped and that he, Bates, would tell where he was and, if he did, would, of course, be entitled to the reward unjustly paid to others.

One of the many weaknesses of this 'confession' is to be found at the beginning of Chapter VI of the Bates book. It says there, 'On the morning of the day I killed the President the taking of the life of Mr. Lincoln had never entered my mind.'

It is impossible to reconcile this statement with that of Booth's accomplice, Payne, who said, just before being hanged, that while he and Booth were listening to the President's speech given from a window of the White House, April 11, 1865, Booth, outraged at Lincoln's willingness to grant suffrage to

some blacks, wanted him to shoot Lincoln then and there. On Payne's refusal because of the great risk, Booth said angrily: 'That is the last speech he will ever make!'

Here, as has been said previously, was born the idea of the assassination which was put into execution three days later. All Booth's previous efforts had been to capture Lincoln, as has been shown, and to hold him at Richmond as hostage for peace or disunion: but the Southern 'cause being almost lost,' says Booth in his diary, 'Something great and decisive must be done.' Then in that 'access of madness' unquestionably induced by despair, drink, and inherited mental imbalance, he commits the deed. The determination to slay was probably sudden — Booth says it was — ripening swiftly by the opportunity occasioned by the President's visit to the theater, but no doubt the germ had been festering in Booth's mind from the night of Lincoln's speech from the window of the White House.

On the same and the following pages as the above, St. Helen-Booth states that, returning on horseback to Washington from a trip 'to near Richmond, Virginia,' he and Herold stopped for 'the night of April 13 [1865] at the old Surratt Tavern at Surrattsville. On the morning of the 14th day of April [the day of the assassination] we came into Washington and were stopped at the block house of the Federal troops at the bridge coming over the east Potomac River'; that he and Herold 'were arrested and detained at

this block house from about eleven o'clock in the morning until in the afternoon about two o'clock, and then went straight to the Kirkwood House where Andrew Johnson boarded.' (Sophisticated people, and Booth was one, 'live' in hotels, and they do not say 'until in the afternoon.')

'On arriving at the hotel, *about three o'clock*,' St. Helen continues, 'I called on Vice-President Johnson.'

How is it possible for this statement to be true when John Wilkes Booth, a conspicuous public character, known by sight to nearly everybody in Washington, was seen there from early morning until he launched himself over the rail of the President's box and disappeared through the stage door of Ford's Theater at ten o'clock in the evening?

At 9 A. M. Booth had his hair trimmed by Charles Wood, barber.

At 11.30 to 12.30 he called at Ford's Theater for his mail (and there learned for the first time that the President was to occupy a box that night to see 'Our American Cousin').

Booth was seen at the theater at that hour of the morning by his close friend Henry Clay Ford, the manager of the theater; by Thomas J. Raybold, purchasing agent and ticket-seller of the theater; by James J. Gifford, stage carpenter of the theater, and employees in the theater; by James W. Pumphrey, livery-stable keeper from whom Booth, at 12.30 on the 14th, engaged a saddle horse which he said he

would not try out then because he was going to Grover's Theater, but would return about 4.30; and by another of the Fords, James R., at Twelfth and 'E' Streets, about 12.30.

Soon after 2.30 he was seen at Mrs. Surratt's home on 'H' Street, between Sixth and Seventh Streets, by Louis J. Weichman and by Mrs. Surratt's daughter Anna.

He was seen in the morning 'down by the stable again.' Between 2 and 3 P. M. he was seen at the back door of Ford's Theater by the colored woman Mary Jane Anderson, who looked, as she testified, 'quite wishful at him.'

He was seen between 2 and 4 P. M. by James Ferguson, 'who kept a restaurant adjoining Ford's Theater.' Booth was standing by the side of 'a small bay mare.' Maddox, property man of Ford's Theater, was with him.

'See what a nice horse I have got,' said Booth. 'Now watch, he can run just like a cat!' 'Striking his spurs into his horse, he went off down the street,' says Ferguson.

At 4 P. M. Booth was seen on Pennsylvania Avenue by his friend and fellow actor, John Matthews, one of the cast in 'Our American Cousin' at Ford's Theater. Booth confided his letter of justification to Matthews, who promised to deliver it in the morning to the Washington *National Intelligencer*.

At the Trial of the Conspirators the testimony of these witnesses was taken. If they swore truly, and

no doubt has been cast upon their statements, what becomes of the Bates story that his Booth was detained by soldiers 'at the block house' till 2 P. M. and did not get to the Kirkwood Hotel until 3 P. M., where he went into immediate conference with Andrew Johnson? This 'conference' must have taken some time, for in it Johnson is declared by Bates to have incited Booth to murder Lincoln. Says Bates:

> Mr. Johnson left the room and *after a little more than an hour* returned, saying that it had been arranged as he had promised, and that General Grant had been, or would be suddenly called from the city, and that, therefore, he and his wife could not attend the theater that evening with the President and Mrs. Lincoln, as had been prearranged, and that such persons as would attend and occupy the box at the theater with the President and his wife would not interfere with me and my purpose [we know that Major Rathbone, who did attend, did interfere and was wounded in consequence] and effort to kill the President, and this he thought an opportune time, and that I would be permitted to escape over the route by which I had entered the city during the forenoon of that day.[1]

Aside from this extraordinary statement concerning Andrew Johnson which Bates had the hardihood to print, how was it possible for John Wilkes Booth to be at 'the block house' when as a matter of fact he was in Washington, as amply attested, and was, among many things, being looked at 'wishfully' by the colored woman, Mary Jane Anderson? The conclusion seems to be inevitable that Mr. Bates's Booth,

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 43.

when he made that 'confession,' was indulging in a little verbal romance.

Bates declares that he did not believe in the 'confession' at first. Examining it carefully and, in the light of recent discoveries, it is difficult to see how anybody could believe in it at any time.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MUMMIFIED BOOTH

In 1900, for one thousand dollars, *The Dearborn Independent* was offered a mummified body said to be that of John Wilkes Booth. The offer included 'affidavits and a wealth of circumstantial detail as an accompaniment.' The body 'was owned by a citizen of Tennessee.'

On Lincoln's birthday — February 12, 1925 — the Booth myth was again revived. The Minneapolis *Daily Star* had an interview with Blanche de Bar Booth, daughter of Junius Brutus Booth, the younger, brother of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth. It was said that the latter had called on her in the late eighties and had convinced her that he was her uncle John Wilkes Booth — alive these many years after Lincoln's assassination.

According to a recent letter to the writer from Blanche de Bar Booth, from Minneapolis where she resides, no such interview as stated took place. A man did knock at her hotel door and, speaking from the outside, said, 'Blanche, or Blanchie, don't you want to see Johnnie?' Believing it to be a jest of some member of the theatrical company with which she was then traveling, she replied that she did not wish to be disturbed. Leaving a card underneath the door, the man departed, saying he would call again.

The card read, 'John Wilkes Booth,' which, in the circumstances, made little impression upon Miss Booth's mind.

The 'John Wilkes Booth' did not venture to call again. 'I wish he had,' wrote Miss Booth. 'I would have put such questions to him as would soon have determined whether or not he was a fraud.'

A fresh outbreak of the rumor that Booth had escaped, lived thirty-eight years after the assassination, and then died a suicide made *The Dearborn Independent* curious to know upon what the rumor was founded. It conducted an exhaustive and remarkably intelligent investigation and satisfied itself that the rumor had no foundation in fact. From persons still living who were in any way connected with the matter, *The Independent* was successful in obtaining evidence, sworn affidavits, refutations, etc., etc., which greatly strengthened the facts already extant of the sophistry of the Bates contention.

In his eagerness to make out a case for his client — himself — Bates overshoots the mark. Take the incident he tells of his Booth being 'much struck' by the genius of a young actress he saw in Enid, Oklahoma, in 1900. Posing as the correspondent of an Eastern dramatic paper, he declared to her that he was writing a play — 'A Life Within the Shadow of Sin' (Booth's Life) — and desired that she, the actress of his choice, should play the leading rôle. He himself 'would take part as actor and manager.' This agreement having been made, 'preparations

were put forward in 1902 for the proper staging and putting the play before the American public.' [1]

Nothing could be more absurdly unlikely than that John Wilkes Booth, if he had escaped the clutches of the law, would dare again risk an appearance on the stage. Yet Bates has this Booth not only willing to do such a thing, but preparing to do it, and, of all things, in a play made up of incidents in Booth's own life. It was because Bates's Booth was unwilling in Texas to face a court where he might be recognized that he employed the lawyer Bates. The acquaintanceship of the two men thus began. Yet here we have this Booth eagerly preparing to face an audience! It is incredible.

In an interview with F. L. Black, Bates stated that the actress he referred to was Mrs. Charles A. (Josie) Cameron. Mrs. Cameron was found in Chicago. From her Black learned that 'the Enid man' who represented the dramatic paper and to whom Bates referred was not Bates's Booth, but John Walter Robinson, and that Robinson had died before Bates's Booth came to Enid. It is remarkable that Bates should cite such a preposterous story as evidence of the genuineness of his John Wilkes Booth.

Thomas Jones, the man who aided Booth to escape across the Potomac, wrote a book of his experiences with Booth. It was decided to sell the book at the World's Fair in Chicago. He had an assistant named Mattingly who acted as 'barker.' He stood outside the tent and told the crowd that the author, Jones,

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 299.

was inside and would sell them copies of the book which told the story. An old Union soldier stepped up and said that he was a friend of 'Abe' Lincoln's, and that he would like to get hold of the —— —— —— —— —— who aided Lincoln's slayer to escape! Jones heard this and went out at the back of the tent.[1] That ended all further effort on Jones's part to sell his book at the Chicago World's Fair (Columbian Exposition). By this we may judge what would have been the fate of Bates's Booth had he attempted to appear in 'A Life Within the Shadow of Sin.'

In 1872, when, according to Bates, John St. Helen (Bates's Booth) lectured Roland Reed (whom Bates continually calls Read), Reed was twenty years of age, but still older than Bates, who was then under twenty. The St. Helen Booth at that time was supposed to be a man of thirty-two. His eloquence, his critical faculty, 'a born genius of high cultivation,' as Bates characterizes him, and the fact that he proved himself 'master of the art of which he was speaking' (the drama), excited the admiration of Bates and made him wonder who the man really was, since he had 'confessed' that 'St. Helen' was not his name.

It is a well-known fact that John Wilkes Booth matched his personal comeliness with fine gallantry and rich courtesy. Clara Morris ('Life on the Stage') and many others bear witness to this. His personality and fine manners easily won him social attention. Especially was Booth considerate of his fellow play-

[1] *The Dearborn Independent*, April 18, 1925.

ers, yet here we have this Booth of Bates inviting a young man of his own profession to a stroll 'to view the swollen Brazos River' and personally insulting him under the plea of criticizing his acting, which reminded the Bates Booth 'of a simpleton attempting to impersonate the character and eccentricities of an idiot, more appropriate to the playgrounds of the innocent and half-witted than to the intelligent public before the footlights.'[1]

The Booths of Bates were strange creatures, verily, with wild and woolly ways, but they were distinctly not the ways of John Wilkes Booth.

No mention is made of the fact that Roland Reed might easily have recognized St. Helen as Booth, if St. Helen had really been Booth. Reed was already fifteen at the time of the assassination. From his infancy he had been associated with the stage. Not unlikely Reed had seen Booth many times in Philadelphia, where Reed's father was a member of the mechanical staff of the old Walnut Street Theater, where the present writer often saw both father and son. For all Bates tells us to the contrary, Reed had no suspicion of St. Helen's identity, although it was but five years since the assassination. What an opportunity Bates lost here in not having Roland Reed struck with astonishment at St. Helen's resemblance to Booth, and, charmed with the words of wisdom from a master, clap his hands to his head and, as Bates said others had done, exclaim:

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 25.

'My God, John Wilkes Booth!'

In this castigation of Reed, as in the 'confession' Bates says St. Helen made to him (and there is no reason to doubt that Bates received a 'confession' — Booth 'confessions' were popular throughout the country), one marvels at the lack of resemblance of any kind to the manner and speech of the real Booth. Every art, profession, and trade has its peculiarities of diction, its distinctive form of expressing things inherent to it — its lingo, so to speak. A careful examination of the speech of Finis L. Bates's John Wilkes Booth forces the conviction that whatever else they spoke, the Bates Booths, besides not being to the manner born, did not speak the language of Booth, knew nothing of the technical terms of the theater, nor the vernacular or lingo of the stage.

The Bates Booth seems to have been a type of character familiar to the early days of Texas and Oklahoma. On being shown a picture of the Bates Booth after death, the Chief of Police of Enid said, 'Oh, yes, we buried a lot of fellows like that out here in those days!'

A staggering peculiarity about the Bates Booth was that he did not know his left leg from his right. Most people are able to make this distinction and preserve it all through life, even when their legs give them no trouble. The Booth of Bates failed lamentably in this respect, and though he says he injured one in the leap he made from the Presidential box, April 14, 1865, he is not able, apparently, to say correctly which one it was.

He declares that, in jumping, he struck his *right* shin bone *against the edge of the stage* and fractured a bone in his leg. This particular Booth seems not to be aware that he describes himself as performing a physically impossible feat. Reference to any contemporary print of the interior of Ford's Theater will show that the boxes were on the stage, at each side. The 'apron,' or footlight part of the stage, extended beyond the boxes. To reach the edge of the stage in such a jump, one must leap into the orchestra pit, or into the audience. The real Booth, of course, launched himself onto the stage away from the audience and away from the edge of the stage in the direction of his avenue of escape.

Most extraordinary thing of all is that while the real Booth knew painfully that it was his *left* leg that was hurt, when he jumped from the box, the bogus Booth insists repeatedly that it was his *right* leg that was injured. It was his *left* boot that was slit and taken from the swollen limb by Dr. Mudd, and his *left* boot which may still be seen in the archives of the War Department at Washington. Furthermore, a picture of this boot may be seen at page 187 of the Bates book. Writing his account after many years, while it may be excusable in Dr. John Frederick May to name the wrong leg that was 'contused,' it is fatal in the St. Helen Booth to do so. It injects the little confounding fly of doubt into the ointment of his 'confession.' In a recent visit to the sub-cellar of the War Building where the Booth relics repose, special

attention was given by the writer of these lines to this slit boot of Booth's. There was no possible doubt that it was the *left* boot. It was then remarked that there had been much controversy as to its being the right or the left boot. Holding up the boot, Major Lucius Meriwether Smith, who was in charge of the party, jocosely said, 'If John Wilkes Booth wore this boot on his right foot, his feet must have been cross-eyed!'

John Wilkes Booths were most obliging to Finis L. Bates. They bobbed up all over the country for him. When one of these Booths — the St. Helen one — after confessing to Bates that he was the *bona-fide* John Wilkes Booth, finally disappeared at Fort Worth, Texas, another came into view, thirty years later, at El Reno, Oklahoma, in April, 1900. This time his name was David E. George.

This presented a difficulty to Bates. He hurdled it easily by declaring that this new Booth and his old friend St. Helen were one and the same. He did not see the David E. George Booth until George lay dead, in an undertaking establishment, in Oklahoma. To make a connection between the two, Bates asserted that on January 17, 1903, he had received a telegram asking him to come to Enid and identify the body of John Wilkes Booth. Asked for a view of the telegram, Bates said it had been lost. He also said that a letter had been left for him by the suicide (George), but that it must have been stolen from the undertaker's place where the body lay. Nobody there remembered

such a letter: nobody there was interested enough to want such a letter. No such letter was ever found, nor were there any papers found on George to identify him as John Wilkes Booth. On the contrary, there was a will, a check for $350, and other papers left by the suicide which showed emphatically that George was George and nobody else.

Penniman, the undertaker at Enid, stated that Bates telegraphed from Memphis asking if he could see the body if he came to Enid. In his book Bates quotes newspaper comments on the death of George and the claim that he, George, was Booth and adds, on page 253 of this book, that it was through these newspaper comments that he, Bates, became advised of the suicide's death. This, of course, is the true explanation.

The St. Helen Booth was an asthmatic saloonkeeper. This new Booth, David E. George, was a house-painter 'who did no painting,' the Bates book declares. However, those who knew him best said, by affidavit, that he worked at his trade constantly, albeit he was 'a drunkard and a morphine addict.'

Bates says that this David E. George Booth was in receipt of remittances of money from mysterious sources. This is an effort to lend the impression that the Booth family were sending money to their errant relative. The postmaster at Enid — and he was certainly in a position to know — swore that George received no remittances of money. Diligent inquiry fails to discover that money was ever sent by any

member of the Booth family either to St. Helen or to George.

Of course this new John Wilkes Booth (George) also made a 'confession.' This time it was to a Mrs. Harper, later Mrs. Young. For her he signed the name 'John Wilkes Booth.' It is in no particular like the signature of the real John Wilkes Booth — not a letter, nor even the dot of an 'i.' Nor has it the swinging connecting line from the 'J' of John to the 'B' of Booth. This 'confession' differed greatly from that of the John St. Helen Booth — who did not know his left leg from his right.

Did this new Booth hit his right shin bone against the edge of the stage? Not he. Was he assisted on his horse at the back door of Ford's Theater in his flight into lower Maryland by David Herold, who, by the way, was somewhere else (aiding the conspirator Payne in his attack on Secretary Seward)? Did he outwit the entire United States forces hunting for him in Maryland and Virginia? Did he conveniently leave an accommodating individual named Robey to die unprotestingly in his stead, as did the St. Helen John Wilkes Booth? Not he, indeed.

This new John Wilkes Booth, according to *his* 'confession,' had friends in Washington who, after the assassination, hid him in a trunk and then got him on a boat to Europe, where he had remained for ten years.[1] If this David E. George Booth, over whose

[1] 'David E. George as John Wilkes Booth,' *The Dearborn Independent*, April 25, 1925.

remains Bates wept, was indeed Bates's old friend St. Helen, what explanation is there as to the two widely different 'confessions'?

Bates asserts that a man named Ruddy or 'Robey' was killed in the Garrett barn by one of the United States soldiers, under the mistaken impression that it was Booth — that is, Bates's John St. Helen; that this Booth escaped by eluding the soldiers through the aid of Bainbridge and Ruggles, the Confederates of Mosby's scattered command whom Booth had met, with 'Willie' Jett, at the crossing of the Rappahannock. In the wagon in which this Booth, as it is said, escaped, he dropped some letters and his diary. He sent the man Robey back for them, with instructions to bring them to him at the Garrett home where Booth then expected to be. Robey recovered the lost articles and brought them to the place appointed, met Herold (Booth, alarmed, having fled) and obligingly slept in the barn in order to be mistaken for Booth, and, without attempting to explain that he was Robey and not Booth, was shot down as the assassin of Lincoln.

When Herold was jerked out of the barn, in a futile effort at subterfuge he said: 'Who is that man in there? He told me his name was Boyd.' And this has been used by Bates to show that it was not Booth who was in the barn, but Robey, who said his name was 'Boyd,'[1] the name used by Booth at Garrett's

[1] 'David E. George as John Wilkes Booth,' *The Dearborn Independent*, April 25, 1925.

and elsewhere. We are not told why Robey should have gone into the barn at all, nor why the Garrett boys should have watched all night in a near-by corn crib for fear Robey would make off with the horses. It was not Robey who wanted eagerly to purchase young Garrett's horse, and so placed himself under suspicion, but the real Booth. And why, if he really did, should Robey have told Herold his name was 'Boyd'? Why should he have let so minor a thing as an explanation stand between him and death? Booth was admittedly a fascinating man, especially to women, but it is to be seriously doubted that, in the few times this Southern overseer Robey saw him, he was so taken with the worn and bedraggled criminal as to be willing to sacrifice his life for him.

Franklin Robey was overseer at the plantation of Samuel Cox, to whom Booth and Herold in their flight appealed for succor. Cox, his foster brother, Thomas Jones, and Robey attended Booth and Herold after Cox had Robey conceal them in the tobacco-bed thicket about a mile from his house.[1] Later, Jones piloted Booth and Herold to the Potomac River and sent them across in a boat.

In 1921, sworn statements were obtained from A. W. Neale, John Garner, and others, residents of the vicinity of La Plate and 'down on the Neck,' not far from the Cox and Jones homes at Cox's Station. These attestants had been well acquainted with Franklin Robey. John Garner swore *that Robey, the*

[1] Oldroyd: *Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, 270.

Cox overseer, was alive in 1889. 'For,' says Garner, 'I moved into the place I am now living at that time, and after I moved, Robey spent a night with us.'[1]

John Garner further stated that 'these three people, Colonel Cox, Tom Jones, and Franklin Robey, and an old negro by the name of Woodland [he evidently did not regard a negro as 'people'] who worked for Jones, are the only ones I ever heard of being connected with the care of Booth and Herold at Cox's place.'

That the 'Ruddy' or 'Robey' mentioned by the St. Helen Booth was the same Robey who was Cox's overseer as stated by John Garner is plainly shown in St. Helen's 'confession.' There he says: 'Mr. Cox refused to admit us into the house; the news of the death of President Lincoln having preceded us, he feared for this reason to take Herold and I in. [John Wilkes Booth would not have made such elementary blunders in speech as Bates often does.] But he called his overseer, or manager about the place, and instructed him to hide us in a pine thicket on or near the banks of the Potomac River, just back of and near his plantation.'[2]

And this overseer, Franklin Robey, as instructed by Cox, took Booth and Herold to the pine thicket, where he hid — this same Robey the overseer of Cox's who was alive, according to the sworn statements of his friends and neighbors, twenty-four years

[1] *The Dearborn Independent*, April 18, 1925.

[2] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 48.

after Bates says Robey was trapped in the Garrett barn, near Port Royal, Virginia, and shot down as John Wilkes Booth. Neither Neale nor Garner ever heard of a man named 'Ruddy' at Cox's Station, but both knew well the Robey who was overseer for Samuel Cox.

Just how 'overseer Robey' could end his life in the Garrett barn in 1865 and still be alive twenty-nine years later to be entertained as the guest of friends would perhaps be a difficult question for Finis L. Bates to answer. If he were alive, he would probably reply as he did to other irreconcilable statements on the same subject, by acknowledging the discrepancies and screening himself behind the remark that it was not *his* 'confession,' but one that was made to him by the man 'John St. Helen.' But it *was* his 'confession.' After careful consideration over a lengthy period, if he did not amplify it, he endorsed and attempted to verify it, and he did all he could to have others accept it as a means, as he expressed it, 'to help him correct history,' which he, Finis L. Bates, believed, or pretended to believe, had been falsified.

No doubt Bates was, as he says, much astonished at the 'confession' the man St. Helen made to him, particularly if the saloon-keeper, St. Helen, possessed the marked personality and but half the eloquence Bates attributes to him. At the time, as Bates admits, he was unfamiliar with the details of the assassination, and as St. Helen rolled these off with great glibness, it must have made a deep impression upon

young Bates, who, later, came to have a financial interest in establishing the truth of his contention — that his John St. Helen-David E. George individuals were the fanatic player John Wilkes Booth. There is, however, about the whole Bates contention, with its alterations of dates of death, its addition and subtraction of phrases, its contradiction of the well-attested facts of the case, a something which gives it 'an ancient and fish-like smell' of suspicion and untruth.

The St. Helen and David E. George Booths were not at all the kind of men Bates describes them — 'of fluent and captivating conversation,' of the 'highest degree of intelligence' and 'refinement.' On the contrary, they have been proved to be 'barroom desperadoes' and 'dope' fiends.

'While Booth, as Mr. Bates suggests, might have lost his diary, compass, knife, carbine (Booth carried no carbine), and pistols, and miraculously all these things might have been picked up by an unknown man who was shot in that barn,' 'but,' as is significantly stated by Black in *The Dearborn Independent*, May 2, 1925, 'it strains the probabilities to expect that the pin bearing Booth's name and fastened to his undershirt, the initials "J. W. B." tattooed on his hand, the broken leg which Booth sustained in his fall, the scar on his neck, which Booth had by reason of a surgical operation, and his dental work (identified by Booth's dentist in Washington), were all likewise transferred to the unknown.' Precisely. And it

might also be asked, How came this 'unknown man,' this 'Ruddy,' not being born or bred to it, in possession of a godlike figure, an eye that 'rolled in terrible beauty,' a *voice* like Mars to threaten and command? How came he in instant possession of the manner, mien, and bearing — theatrical, if you will — of a gifted descendant of the great Junius Brutus Booth? It cannot be done. The age of miracles has passed!

Bates says that George's eyes were black, like St. Helen's. In a letter to the author, January 24, 1926, W. H. Ryan who embalmed the body of the David E. George Booth, reaffirmed his former statement that, as the body of George lay in the undertaking establishment, he 'many times lifted the lids of George's eyes,' and that they were *blue*, and that he called attention to the fact. Furthermore, that he was in no way ever convinced that George was John Wilkes Booth. The eyes of the fanatic Booth who killed Abraham Lincoln were as black as night.

Naturally the question arises as to what object Bates had in all this contention. He may have been sincere. He may have actually believed that Booth escaped punishment. He may have longed so desperately to have it true that he ended in believing it to be the truth. It is not to be forgotten, though, that back of it all was the fact that if Bates could make the United States Government believe the story, and could produce the body of his Booth, he, Bates, would be entitled to the princely rewards offered for the body of Lincoln's assassin.

The Mummified Booth

Booth had one distinctive mark of identification of which too little had been noted, the initials 'J. W. B.' which were pricked in India ink on his right hand. It was by this that Booth identified himself to several persons, notably to 'Willie' Jett, the Confederate soldier, at the Port Conway crossing of the Rappahannock, and to Samuel Cox, at Cox's house after the assassination. Oldroyd [1] speaks of it as being one of the marks of identification at the official inquest in April, 1865, at which were present Dr. John Frederick May, Surgeon-General Barnes and his assistant, accompanied by Judge-Advocate-General the Honorable Joseph Holt, John A. Bingham, Major Eckhert, William G. Moore, Clerk of the War Department, Colonel L. C. Baker, Lieutenant Baker, Lieutenant-Colonel Conger, Charles Dawson, J. L. Smith, Mr. Gardner, photographer, and an assistant, T. J. Sullivan. In May, 1927, Colonel O. H. Oldroyd told the present writer that of his own knowledge he was positive that all those in Washington who knew John Wilkes Booth intimately, all the actors who had last appeared in the same plays with him, including Henry Clay Ford, one of Booth's most intimate friends, went to the Navy Yard and identified the remains of Booth which had just been brought up from the Garrett farm in Virginia.

'Make no mistake,' Ford said to Oldroyd, 'it was certainly John. There were the same old India ink initials on his hand.'

[1] *Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, 80.

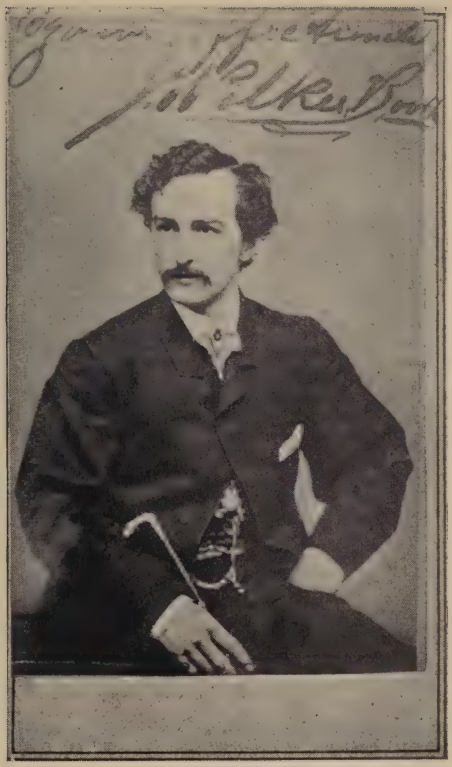
The Charles Dawson, present at the Government's command at the identification of Booth's body as it lay on the ironclad in the Potomac, was a clerk at the National Hotel, where Booth always stayed when in Washington. They were intimate enough to take afternoon strolls together on Pennsylvania Avenue, though Booth never confided to Dawson aught of the conspiracy plans. The first to greet Booth on his arrival at the hotel, proffering him the pen, after the polite fashion of hotel clerks, with which to write his name on the register, and seeing the handsome actor daily, he would know Booth, the Government reasoned, if anybody would.

Dawson identified the body of Booth by the initials on the hand, and swore that he had frequently observed the letters on Booth's hand while he was signing the hotel register, and on one occasion had said, 'Booth, what a fool you were to disfigure that pretty hand in such a way.' As a matter of fact, Booth's hand, while shapely, hardly merited the epithet 'pretty.' It was a large hand about which he often jested.

Sergeant J. M. Peddicord was the guard in charge of the Booth body on board the Montauk. In a letter to the Roanoke, Virginia, *Evening News*, June 6, 1903, he described the details of the *post-mortem* examination witnessed by him April 27, 1865, and stated that he remembered the initials 'J. W. B.' on Booth's hand.[1]

It is significant that no mention was made of these

[1] See also *The Dearborn Independent*, May 2, 1925.



JOHN WILKES BOOTH

Autographed photograph presented to
Mrs. James Seymour in New Orleans in 1864

initials being found upon the hand of David E. George whom Finis L. Bates claims was the real John Wilkes Booth. Nor did the John St. Helen Booth disclose these initials to Bates. Had they been present, they were far too important to be overlooked by Penniman, the undertaker, or his assistant, Ryan, at Enid, and particularly were they too important to be overlooked by the newspaper scribes eager and on the lookout for any positive sign by which the body could be recognized as that of Booth. Above all was it too important a matter to be overlooked by the ever-watchful Finis L. Bates. If he could have presented any such evidence as these tell-tale marks, he would have flaunted it. In his absurd claim for the David E. George body, Bates presents nothing which is half so convincing as the presence of these little India ink initials would have been. But he makes no mention whatever of them.

At that, the present writer reasoned, they might have been overlooked. On April 30, 1927, he addressed a letter to William B. Penniman, the undertaker at Enid (now of Columbus, Ohio), and also one to William H. Ryan, his assistant. Mr. Ryan is now in the State Legislature of Oklahoma. The letter ran:

> Did you, or anybody in your establishment at Enid, notice the initials 'J. W. B.' on the hand or arm of the David E. George corpse?
>
> In India ink, Booth had these initials on his hand or arm. He identified himself by them to several people.

Within ten days from Penniman this came:

There were no tattoo marks on the body.

W. B. P.

From Ryan, this:

No, there was not any sutch Initials on his Body anywhere.

Yours truly
W. H. Ryan

As many people know, who have made the effort, such telltale marks as these are almost if not quite impossible to eradicate. The body identified at Washington by the Government as Booth's body had the tattooed initials 'J. W. B.' on the right hand. The body of Bates's Booth had no such initials. The conclusion seems obvious.

No one claiming the David E. George body at Enid, Bates was allowed to take it away. If the Booth family had been, as Bates intimates, sending money surreptitiously to support the so-called David E. George because in reality he was John Wilkes Booth, it is inconceivable that, for the mother's sake alone, they would not have found some way to get possession of that body and so save it from the disgrace and humiliation to which it has been subjected. Edwin Booth, had he believed the Bates yarn, was amply able, and would have been only too willing to pay the Bates price for that body. It has never been buried, and until recently it might have been seen at Memphis, Tennessee, housed in a garage. The writer

was lately authoritatively informed that it has been sold to 'parties in the West.' In loosely declaring himself to be John Wilkes Booth, what a fearsome penalty this poor old house-painter, George, has paid — his ungratified bones deprived all these years of their natural sepulture.

In a manner of which the quaint Miss Holloway never dreamed, she has routed the contention of Finis L. Bates and all others that Booth escaped punishment by the Government. No one has ever yet questioned the fact that Booth went to the Garrett house, where he lived for two or three days with the Garrett family. This man posing as Boyd, a wounded Confederate soldier, and who sat silent at the dinner table when the assassination was discussed, was the same man incontestably who was shot and whose temples Miss Holloway bathed till he died.

CHAPTER XXII

THE APPEAL TO GENERAL GRANT FOR BOOTH'S REMAINS

Edwin Booth's first knowledge of his brother's crime was brought to him by his colored servant at an early hour of the morning of April 15, 1865. Demanding to know why his orders not to be disturbed until he rang, had been disobeyed, there came this answer:

'Oh, Massa Edwin,' said the servant, presenting the morning papers with trembling hands, 'you never could guess what has happened! Somethin' dreadful! The President has been shot. And, oh, Massa Edwin, I am afraid Massa John has done it!'

'Incredulously Mr. Booth read, until he came to the flourish of the dagger, and the shout of "Sic semper tyrannis";[1] in that he recognized the fanatical and misguided spirit, the self-appointed avenger of a South whose Brutus he theatrically thought himself.'[2]

[1] Booth in his diary says he cried, 'Sic semper tyrannis!' before he fired. W. J. Ferguson, an actor in the cast, who heard the shot and saw Booth jump from the box, declares that Booth did not flourish his dagger, did not speak on alighting on the stage, but made directly for the rear door of the theater, passing between Laura Keene and himself (Ferguson), who were standing in the entrance awaiting their turn to appear again. (*Saturday Evening Post*, February 12, 1927.)

[2] Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich: *Crowding Memories*, 71.

The Appeal for Booth's Remains

At the time of the assassination, Edwin Booth was playing at the Boston Theater, in Boston. That night his programme consisted of a double offering to the public, 'Don Cæsar de Bazan' and 'The Iron Chest' — and in that order. Ida Vernon, the leading lady of Edwin Booth's company, told Clara Laughlin that 'about the moment of John's crime Edwin, as "Sir Edward Mortimer" the homicide, was standing with uplifted dagger threatening the life of a youth who seemed on the point of opening an iron chest wherein the secret of Sir Edward's guilt was locked.' [1]

Early on the morning of April 15th, the manager of the theater, Henry C. Jarrett, addressed Edwin Booth the following letter:

Edwin Booth, Esq.

My dear Sir:

A fearful calamity is upon us. The President of the United States has fallen by the hand of an assassin, and I am shocked to say suspicion points to one nearly related to you as the perpetrator of this horrid deed. God grant that it may not prove so! With this knowledge, and out of respect to the anguish which will fill the public mind as soon as the appalling fact shall be fully revealed, I have concluded to close the Boston Theater until further notice. Please signify to me your coöperation in this matter. In great sorrow, and in haste, I remain, yours very truly,

Henry C. Jarrett

Overwhelmed, Edwin Booth made the following brave reply:

[1] Laughlin: *The Death of Lincoln*, 296.

John Wilkes Booth

Henry C. Jarrett, Esq.

My dear Sir: With deepest sorrow and great agitation I thank you for relieving me of my engagement with yourself and the public. The news of the morning has made me wretched, indeed, not only because of a brother's crime, but because a most justly honored and patriotic ruler has fallen, in an hour of national joy, by the hand of an assassin. The memory of the thousands who have fallen in the field, in our country's defense, during this struggle, cannot be forgotten by me, even in this, the most distressing day of my life. And I most sincerely pray that the victories we have already won may stay the brand of war and the tide of loyal blood. While mourning, in common with all other loyal hearts, the death of the President, I am oppressed by a private woe not to be expressed in words. But whatever calamity may befall me and mine, my country, one and indivisible, has my warmest devotion.

Edwin Booth

This letter did much to soften public feeling against Edwin Booth and against all the innocent who bore the name of Booth. Edwin had stood — still stood — so high in the estimation of the people that thousands instantly scouted the idea of any complicity on his part in the dread deed. The bare thought that there could be any who would *doubt him greatly wounded the exceptionally tender heart of the man.*

Only the more rabidly thoughtless felt impelled at any time to do him harm. For many days he stood in danger of sudden attack and death. Threatening letters and ominous messages of all kinds were sent him at his home in New York. He was repeatedly warned that none should bear his name and survive;

that his house should be razed and his family destroyed.

His brother, Junius Brutus Booth, billed to play in Cincinnati, narrowly escaped death at the hands of a mob. An account of the matter was printed in the papers at the time. Emil Benlier, clerk of the Burnet House where Booth was staying, is speaking:

[Junius Brutus] Booth came downstairs the morning after the assassination, and after breakfast was on the point of going out to take a stroll. I had just heard, a few minutes before, that the people were in a tumult and had torn down his bills all over the city. He came up to the desk and as he did so I informed him that I thought it would be best for him not to go out in the streets. He looked at me in amazement and asked what I meant. 'Haven't you heard the news?' said I. He replied that he had not. I didn't like to say any more, and he walked off, looking greatly puzzled. Going to a friend who was standing near, he asked in rather an excited manner what that young man meant by talking that way, and wanted to know if I wasn't crazy. The man told him no, that I was the clerk. More mystified than ever, he returned and demanded my reason for the remark. I saw that he was ignorant of the tragedy and reluctantly informed him that his brother had killed the President. He was the most horrified man that I ever saw; and for the moment he was overcome by the shock. I suggested to him that it would be better for him to go to his room, and he did so, being accompanied by one or two of his friends. He had scarcely gone upstairs before the room he left was filled with people. The mob was fully five hundred in number and wanted to find Booth. They were perfectly furious, and it was with the greatest difficulty that we checked them by the story

that their intended victim had left the house. They would have hanged him in a minute if they could have laid hands upon him, so great was their rage. After leaving, they returned almost immediately, but by this time we had removed Booth from his room to that of a friend. The mob watched the house so closely that it was four or five days before he had a chance to leave. We finally smuggled him away, however.

On the receipt of the letter from Jarrett, and on his reply to it closing the engagement, the chief thought of Edwin Booth was of his mother. The suspicions as to the perpetrator of the crime not then being wholly confirmed, he telegraphed her encouragingly and apprised her of his intention to take the midnight train to her. This done, he then shut himself up in his room with the 'prayerful wish that the frenzied mob,' as Mrs. Aldrich tells us, 'might seek and find him and end his misery.'

Such was Edwin Booth's distress of mind, he determined never to appear upon the stage again. His sister, Asia, and her husband, John S. Clarke, the comedian, with whom Edwin was associated in the lesseeship of the Winter Garden in New York and the Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia, ultimately left America, taking up residence in England. They felt themselves unable to bear the shame and disgrace that had come to them.

As excitement died and the public, in its affection and appreciation of Edwin and his splendid gifts as a tragedian, realized the injustice of making him in any

way responsible for the crazy deed of his brother, the demand for Edwin's reappearance grew rapidly and became insistent. Even so, it is doubtful if Edwin would have yielded to that demand but for the heavy financial drain upon him from his two theaters and many other personal obligations assumed in happier days.

He made his reappearance January 3, 1866, at the Winter Garden, as 'Hamlet.' An attempt had been made in a certain direction of the press to excite prejudice against him because of his brother's crime. It failed miserably.

> The theater was densely crowded, and as Booth came on the stage the audience rose, and cheered him again and again, making every possible demonstration of sympathy and friendship. As I looked around on that tumultuous assemblage, I saw not even one person who had remained seated.[1]

It has been repeatedly stated that Edwin Booth reviled the memory of his brother, John Wilkes Booth. On the contrary, while he deplored and mourned all his life long that awful deed from which he and his family were such sufferers, he loved and pitied 'Johnnie,' and ever kept a picture of him by his bedside.[2]

He said of him: 'He was a misguided youth influenced by a mistaken fanaticism which appealed to

[1] William Winter: *Vagrant Memories*, 172.
[2] See frontispiece.

him in a theatrical sense'; that he was 'inspired by false ideas of secessionism.' [1]

As time went by, and in order to comfort the anguish of his aged mother, Edwin Booth repeatedly appealed to the Government for the body of his brother John. One at least of these appeals was ignored. It was too early. When Stanton was replaced by General Grant in the War Office, Booth wrote him a supplicatory letter, probably encouraged thereto by his friend, General Adam Badeau, who had been Grant's military secretary.

Barnum's Hotel
Baltimore, *Sept.* 11, 1867

General U. S. Grant:

Sir:

Having once received a promise from Mr. Stanton that the family of John Wilkes Booth should be permitted to obtain the body when sufficient time had elapsed, I yielded to the entreaties of my mother and applied for it to the 'Secretary of War' — I fear too soon, for the letter was unheeded — if, indeed, it ever reached him.

I now appeal to you on behalf of my heart-broken mother — that she may receive the remains of her son.

You, Sir, can understand what a consolation it would be to an aged parent to have the privilege of visiting the grave of her child, and I feel assured that you will, even in the midst of your most pressing duties, feel a touch of sympathy for her — one of the greatest sufferers living.

May I not hope that you will listen to our entreaties and send me some encouragement — some information how and where the remains may be obtained?

[1] From a recent letter from his daughter to the present writer.

By so doing you will receive the gratitude of a most unhappy family, and will — I am sure — be justified by all right-thinking minds should the matter ever become known to others than ourselves.

I shall remain in Baltimore two weeks from the date of this letter — during which time I could send a trustworthy person to bring hither and privately bury the remains in the family grounds, thus relieving my poor mother of much misery.

Apologizing for my intrusion, and anxiously awaiting a reply to this —

I am, Sir, with great respect
Yr obt servant
EDWIN BOOTH

The Johnson Administration, with its inadequate handling of the Reconstruction question with which it was illy capable to deal, with its impeachment trial of the President, etc., etc., was in such turmoil that again nothing came of the great tragedian's application for the remains of wayward John Wilkes Booth. After two years Edwin Booth, nothing daunted by his lack of success in having the prayers of himself and his family granted, tried again:

NEW YORK, *February* 10, 1869

Andrew Johnson, Esq.
President of the United States

DEAR SIR:

May I not now ask your kind consideration of my poor mother's request in relation to her son's remains?

The bearer of this (Mr. John Weaver) is sexton of Christ's Church, Baltimore, who will observe the strictest

secrecy in this matter — and you may rest assured that none of my family desires its publicity.

Unable to visit Washington, I have deputed Mr. Weaver — in whom I have the fullest confidence — and I beg that you will not delay in ordering the body to be given to his care. He will retain it (placing it in his vault) until such time as we can remove the other members of our family to the Baltimore Cemetery, and thus prevent any special notice of it.

There is also (I am told) a trunk of his at the National Hotel — which I once applied for, but was refused — it being under seal of the War Department — it may contain relics of the poor misguided boy, which would be dear to his sorrowing mother, and of no use to any one. Your Excellency would greatly lessen the crushing weight of grief that is hurrying my mother to the grave by giving immediate orders for the safe delivery of the remains of John Wilkes Booth to Mr. Weaver, and gain the lasting gratitude of

Yr. obt. Servt.

Edwin Booth

At last the day came when the mother's plea for the body of her boy was granted. Andrew Johnson, chastened by his tumultuous experience as President and who had begun the administration of his high office with a fury that salted the wounds of a divided people, wrote the order of release:

Executive Mansion

February 15, 1869

The Honorable the Secretary of War will cause to be delivered to Mr. John Weaver, Sexton of Christ Church, Baltimore, the remains of John Wilkes Booth, for the purposes mentioned in the within communication.

Andrew Johnson

The Appeal for Booth's Remains

Booth here speaks of the sorrow of his family. Few people realize the crushing weight of the blow that came to it. Feeling was so taut at the time that fewer still cared even to consider aught concerning that family except that it might be speedily exterminated.

In New York, when the awful news had come, the agonized mother prays, if rumor prove true, that her misguided son may have the courage to destroy himself and so save the family name the stain and disgrace of the scaffold. Summoned to the bedside of her daughter, Asia, Mrs. John S. Clarke, in Philadelphia, the mother was conducted to the train by the sculptor Launt Thompson, who, with the Thomas Bailey Aldriches, abated nothing of their affectionate attentions to the Booth family in this their darkest hour.

Thompson found time before the train started to secure a newspaper. He put it into the hands of the mother, saying:

'You will need now all your courage. The paper in your hand will tell you what, unhappily, we must all wish to hear. John Wilkes is dead.' . . .

On the moving train, surrounded by strangers, the poor mother sat alone in her misery, while every one about her, unconscious of her presence, was reading and talking, with burning indignation, of her son, the assassin of the President. Before the train had reached its journey's end, Mrs. Booth, with wonderful fortitude and self-restraint, had read the pitiful story of her misguided boy's wanderings, capture and death. And alone in her wall of silence read — 'Tell my mother that I died for my country.' [1]

[1] Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich: *Crowding Memories*, 76.

In time, as ordered, the body of Booth was delivered to Sexton Weaver. It was driven from the Arsenal grounds to the establishment of Harvey and Marr, Washington undertakers. Edwin Booth accompanied Weaver to receive the remains. The lid of the rude gun-box was pried open, the army blanket unwrapped, disclosing the remains of the actor fanatic, the remains of a wasted genius. The dentist who had filled the cavity in John Booth's teeth fully identified his work. At the inquest in Washington, in 1865, two 'spinal spools' through which the bullet had passed had been removed from the neck by government surgeons and are kept as a record in the Medical Museum at Washington, then Ford's old theater,[1] where the assassination took place. The building was taken over by the Government after the murder and became a Government medical museum, but is now (1927) used for the reception and distribution of Government publications. Later it will become the Lincoln Museum and will house the extraordinary collection of Lincoln pictures, prints, curios, and mementoes gathered by Osborn H. Oldroyd which were recently purchased by the Government from Mr. Oldroyd for $50,000. These mementoes are

[1] Ford was eager to regain possession of his theater, but by one of those arbitrary acts for which War Secretary Stanton was famous, the Government seized the building and never again released it.

In the rearrangement of Ford's old theater to house the Oldroyd Lincoln mementoes, a small section of the ample space might be given to show the box and a portion of the stage in their exact positions as at the time of the tragedy.

at present exhibited at the Peterson house, just across the street from the entrance to Ford's Theater. It was to the Peterson house that the wounded President was carried on the night of the assassination. Lincoln died there, April 15, 1865.

Satisfied that they had received from the Government the remains of the great culprit John Wilkes Booth, Weaver, the sexton of Christ's Church, Baltimore, accompanied the remains to his undertaking establishment in the Monumental City.

At Baltimore there was another and fuller identification. It may be confidently asserted that no man, dead or alive, has been more frequently and completely identified than this same John Wilkes Booth.

Says the ever-doubting Finis L. Bates:[1]

To strengthen the theory that Booth had been captured and killed by Government troops, there was a publication in the Baltimore *Sun* of January 18, 1903, as follows:

Where Booth Lies

Edwin Booth never desisted in his potent and quiet endeavor to recover the body of John Wilkes Booth until he delivered it to his mother in Maryland.

Of John Wilkes Booth's burial there can be no doubt. John T. Ford, the Baltimore theatrical manager, and Charles B. Bishop, the comedian, both told me that they witnessed for Edwin Booth the exhuming of the body. And that the same was identified and sent to his mother. This should set at rest the rumors that Booth lives.

Among those also present at this Baltimore identi-

[1] *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 183.

fication of the body which the Government had returned to the Booth family was Blanche Chapman, later Mrs. H. Clay Ford. She was the god-daughter of John T. Ford and was playing at the time in his company of which Charles B. Bishop was the comedian. When this *Sun* article appeared in 1903, Miss Chapman was again playing in Baltimore as the leading lady of the 'Why Smith Left Home' company. Commenting on the *Sun* article, she said, among other things, according to Bates:

> It was not long before I began to realize what this solemn little conclave meant. The muddy brown army blanket was partly removed from the object inside of it with decorous solemnity that I could not misunderstand. Mr. Bishop approached the box, and, turning to Junius Brutus Booth, said in a low tone: 'You are sure about that being the only tooth in his head that had been filled?' 'Yes.'
>
> Mr. Bishop gently pressed down the lower jaw of the body in the box and with his thumb and forefinger withdrew the tooth indicated. It had been filled with gold, and the peculiar form of the filling was at once recognized by Junius Brutus Booth. Mr. Bishop then carefully drew off one of the long riding-boots which were on the feet and limb of the body, which had evidently lain in the earth for years, and, as he did so, the foot and the lower portion of the limb remained in the boot. An examination was then made and it was plainly seen that the ankle had been fractured. By this time I realized by what I saw and heard that the remains in the box were those of John Wilkes Booth, returned to the family by the Government.

Whereupon Bates waxes contradictory and satir-

ical at Miss Chapman's expense, declaring that her story must 'fall flat' in that:

It is a physical fact that Dr. Mudd cut one of the riding-boots from the injured limb of Booth on the morning of April 15, 1865 . . . and from that date to the date of his supposed capture and burial Booth had on but one riding boot. And at the time this supposed identification was being made in Baltimore, as described by Miss Chapman, the very boot said to have been drawn off . . . was at the self-same time in the archives of the Government at Washington . . . so that the identification story . . . as described by the Baltimore Sun and Miss Chapman . . . prove it to have been the body of someone else who had on two boots.

The present writer felt that Miss Chapman might furnish an illuminating word on the subject, she being still alive and professionally active. He wrote her, making her acquainted with the Bates statement. From her residence at Rutherford, New Jersey, October 6, 1927, she responded immediately as follows:

I mention this [the likelihood of not being able to keep an appointment to meet the writer] because under the circumstances I am afraid I shall not be here during the winter and so have decided to write the information you desire. I am doing this hurriedly, as I am putting up my grape jelly and have to watch it, so will you please phrase it [no such liberty was taken!] if necessary, at your discretion.

It was during a rehearsal at the old Holliday Street Theatre — I think about 1870,[1] though I am uncertain as to the year — that Mr. John Ford came on the stage and

[1] February, 1869.

held a hurried and whispered conversation with Mr. C. B. Bishop, our comedian at the time. The rehearsal was immediately dismissed and Mr. Ford walked over to me, took both my hands in his, and said; 'Blanche, I want you to keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut.' He then walked me through the stage entrance (my sister Ella walking with Bishop) and across the street to Weaver's undertaking establishment. We entered the large room and walked through into the next smaller room. I immediately recognized Mrs. Booth [John Wilkes's mother] and his sister Rosalie. I knew them both very well, as Marion Booth, Junius Brutus Booth's daughter, and I were sent home together from the Sisters of Sacred Heart Convent in Philadelphia — the Sisters thinking it best not to have actors' children there at the time. I went home with Marion, then living with her uncle Edwin Booth, and was her guest there for a matter of two weeks.

I greeted Mrs. Booth and Rosalie and turned to look at what seemed to me like a mummy wrapped in a brown-colored sort of blanket. The eyes and nose, though shrunken a little, had not receded as is usual. The skin was brown and shriveled, the lips gone, and wonderful teeth were exposed. I am enclosing, as near as I can draw it, a diagram of the positions of each of us. *Mr. Junius Brutus Booth was not present.* The first to speak was Mr. 'Joe' Booth, or 'Doc' Booth, as he was called, a brother of John Wilkes Booth. He said: 'If this is the body of John Wilkes Booth (he never once referred to him as "brother") it has but one plugged tooth in its head.'[1] Mr. Weaver showed a dentist's chart which Mr. Booth took and handed to Mr. Bishop. Taking hold of and drawing down the lower jaw, Mr. Bishop inserted his fingers and took out the plugged tooth and showed it to all of us. Mr. Weaver and

[1] There was another tooth filled, so recently that 'Doc' Booth could not have known of it.

Mr. Bishop then walked to the foot of the box, and Mr. Weaver cut the blanket, I should say, about a half a yard. *I saw no boot*, therefore could not have said so, as implied in Mr. Finis L. Bates's book. What I *did* see was a *shoe* that had been slit. Bishop unwrapped the leg or ankle, I do not know which, taking off what seemed to be a bandage, and they saw the broken bone. The men all examined it. Mr. Weaver asked my sister Ella to cut a lock of hair; but Ella turned away. Mr. Weaver then gave the scissors to me and I cut off a large lock that hung over the forehead. I handed it to Mr. Weaver, who in turn gave it to Mrs. Booth. I shall never forget that moment, Mr. Wilson. The sorrow in Mrs. Booth's face. The tears dropping in her lap as she separated the strands of hair! And the faint moans coming from her lips. She gave my sister and myself both a strand.

As we left the front office, H. Clay Ford (whom I afterwards married) remarked to me, 'I could see every feature in that face of John Wilkes Booth.' I later understood from him that the body was taken that night to Greenmount Cemetery and buried in the Booth plot. I hardly think the Booths would have placed any one else there had they not been *positive* it was John's body. Mr. Ford also told me that the body had been lying under the old Capitol Prison in Washington.

There never was any doubt in the minds of the Ford family that it was the body of John Wilkes Booth. *All present felt that it was a perfect identification.*

Not satisfied with disputing the eye-evidence of Booth's family and closest friends, Bates adds this extraordinary paragraph:

The Government could not afford to be caught red-handed in the act of attempting to palm off a spurious body on the friends and relatives of John Wilkes Booth.

This is, indeed, a serious indictment of a perfectly good Government which is not without standing among the nations of the world, and the venom of that accusation was unquestionably inspired by the refusal of the Government to consider as serious Bates's claim that the Government had captured and shot the wrong man, and that he, Bates, possessed the body of the real assassin and was willing to surrender it for the trifling sum of one hundred thousand dollars. Ignoring all the previous indisputable evidence of the Government, and in face of this testimony of Booth's family and close friends, it is absurdly contended by Bates that the Booth family accepted a spurious body in order to protect 'a living Booth at Glenrose Mills, Texas.' [1]

A boyhood friend of John Wilkes Booth, Colonel William M. Pegram, of Baltimore, indignant with Bates and his untenable assertions, characterized them as 'the creation of a mind utterly imaginative, or grossly misinformed.' Pegram gave an interesting and important statement to the Maryland Historical Society. He also, with another boyhood friend of Booth's, Henry C. Wagner, saw and examined Booth's body when it came from Washington to Baltimore. Pegram's statement follows:

> On the underside of the lid had been placed with a marking ink the single word 'Booth,' evidently to identify the remains should they ever be removed.
>
> Mr. Wagner and I looked at the body as it lay dressed in

[1] Bates: *Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, 184–85.

the suit of clothes in which he had been shot. On the *right* leg [italics by the present writer] was a long cavalry boot, coming up to the knee. The *left* leg was disjointed both at knee and ankle, the latter having been broken when he jumped from the box to the stage of the theater after the shooting of Lincoln. [Bates has it that in jumping from the box to the stage Booth broke his *right* leg.]

Pegram, continuing, says:

It will be remembered that Dr. Mudd . . . cut the boot from the *left* leg and manufactured a shoe from the boot's foot,[1] in which we saw the remains of the actual foot lying in the casket. It had become separated from the bones of the leg, and they also separated at the knee. The skin was drawn over the grinning skull, which showed the splendid teeth for which Booth was noted, there being only a single filling, which was identified by the dentist who did the work. The coal-black hair which rolled back from the forehead had grown probably nearly a foot in length. *The family fully identified the body.*

Under oath, Henry C. Wagner verified Colonel Pegram's statement, as follows:

I have read the foregoing statement of William M. Pegram with regard to our visit to Weaver's (the undertaker's), in February, 1869, and there viewing the remains of John Wilkes Booth, just brought from Washington, and I hereby certify that the said statement is absolutely correct in every particular.

(Signed) HENRY C. WEAVER

The recognition of Booth's remains by these two

[1] This is a slight error. The left boot, except for the incision made by Dr. Mudd in order to take it easily from Booth's swollen leg, is still intact and in possession of the Government, at Washington.

boyhood friends, and the Booth mother even if the body had not been fully identified by Booth's fellow actors and many friends at Washington shortly after Booth's death, would be sufficient to destroy Bates's story of Booth's escape.

The prayers of the long-suffering, broken-hearted Booth mother had at last been answered, and the remains of her beautiful, if erring, son had been restored to her, to be laid at rest beside the father from whom he had inherited so much that was sad, along with so much that was wonderful.

John was the youngest of her ten children, her idol, 'and whatever the world might find of him unlovely, he was to her a most devoted son.' [1]

In a letter to William Winter, Edwin Booth who, with all his honors and success, was yet a man of many sorrows, has this to say of his mother:

I cannot grieve at death. It seems to me the greatest boon the Almighty has granted us. . . . When last I saw my dear mother alive, she had just entered her eighty-fourth year, after a weary battle of certainly sixty years of sorrow. Her face was seamed with wrinkles, in every one of which could be plainly seen the ravages of suffering. No one ever loved his parents dearer than I; and yet, for years, I prayed — silently, deeply, in my soul — for her release; and when it came, and I was hastily summoned to her death-bed, I found the weary old woman transformed into a most beautiful object — so beautiful that I would not have believed it to be my poor old mother's corse, had I seen it by mere chance. The natural grief that

[1] Aldrich: *The Striking Hours.*

'The love and sympathy between him [John Wilkes Booth] and his mother were very close, very strong. No matter how far apart they were, she seemed to know, in some mysterious way, when anything was wrong with him. If he were ill, or unfit to play, he would often receive a letter of sympathy, counsel, and warning, written when she could not possibly have received any news of him. He has told me of this, himself.'

The Stage Reminiscences of Mrs. [*G. H.*] *Gilbert*, New York, 1901

MARY HOLMES BOOTH

Photograph of the Booth mother from the chiffonier in Edwin Booth's bedroom at The Players

possessed me, from the moment I was summoned until I raised the cloth from her dear face, ceased at once, and my soul said, 'God be thanked!' And I was happy in her happiness — which the good God revealed to me in the exquisite loveliness of her dead features. . . . It is God's sign-manual of immortality. . . . With meditating that she must die once, I have the patience to endure it now.[1]

[1] Winter: *Life and Art of Edwin Booth.*

CHAPTER XXIII

SUMMATION

NOTWITHSTANDING its illogical conclusions, its amazing insistence that Andrew Johnson was the instigating factor back of Booth, and its repeated assertion that Booth had escaped and lived many years after his crime, Bates's book, 'The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth,' had a large sale, though that sale was mostly confined to the South. There, many people seemed to find not only deep interest, but satisfaction and solace in the thought that he who had struck a sweeping blow for the Southern 'Cause' had gone free of punishment.

In other parts of the South, where the escape of Booth was not credited, not a little sentiment was aroused for the memory of the man who had sacrificed everything, even life itself, in his effort to aid the South in her desperate struggle for independence. In these quarters Booth was hailed as a hero whose death was little less than martyrdom. The striking down of Lincoln was looked upon as 'retributive justice.' In his book, 'The End of an Era,' John S. Wise, refusing 'to lie for sentiment's sake,' tells exactly what the feeling was among 'the thoughtless, desperate, and ignorant people' of the Southland when the news of Lincoln's assassination reached them:

> In maturer years I have been ashamed of what I felt and

said when I heard of that awful calamity. However, men ought to be judged for their thought and feelings by the circumstance of their surroundings. For four years we had been fighting. In that struggle all had been lost. Lincoln incarnated to us the idea of oppression and conquest. We had seen his face over the coffins of our brothers and relatives and friends, in the flames of Richmond, and in the disaster of Appomattox. In blood and flames and torture the temples of our lives were tumbling about our heads. We were desperate and vindictive, and whoever denies it is forgetful or is false.

We greeted his death in a spirit of reckless hate, and hailed it as bringing agony and bitterness to those who were the cause of our own agony and bitterness. To us Lincoln was an inhuman monster, Grant a butcher and Sherman a fiend. Time taught us that Lincoln was a man of marvelous humanity. Appomattox and what followed revealed Grant in his matchless magnanimity, and the bitterness toward Sherman was softened in subsequent years. But with our feeling then, if the news had come that all three of these had been engulfed in a common disaster with ourselves, we should have felt satisfaction in the fact and not have questioned too closely how it had been brought about.

We were poor, starved, conquered, despairing, and to expect men to have no malice and no vindictiveness at such a time, is to look for angels in human form. Thank God such feelings do not last long, at least in their fiercest intensity.

Even the day after Lincoln's death, so intensely adverse to him was the feeling in certain parts of the North, the windows of the United States Telegraph office in Auburn, New York, were smashed because

they displayed the crape-draped picture of the martyred President. The post-office in the town was served in the same way for the same reason.

In reply to the dispatch giving the information of the outrage, the president of the company sent the following:

NEW YORK, *April* 17, 1865.

To H. A. Chute, Division Superintendent
United States Telegraph Company
Auburn, N.Y.

Direct that our office at Auburn be fully draped in mourning, and that a portrait of our martyred President, similarly draped, be displayed at every pane of glass. Defend the office and the portals with powder, lead, and steel, until after the obsequies on Wednesday.

JAMES MACKAYE, *President*[1]

There was one exception to the general grief [at Lincoln's death] too remarkable to be passed over in silence. Among the extreme radicals in Congress, Mr. Lincoln's determined clemency and liberality toward the Southern people had made an impression so unfavorable that, though they were naturally shocked at his murder, they did not, among themselves, conceal their gratification that he was no longer in the way. In a political caucus, held a few hours after the President's death, 'the feeling was nearly universal,' to quote the language of one of their most prominent representatives, 'that the accession of Johnson to the presidency would prove a godsend to the country.'[2]

And what would have delighted and comforted the

[1] Percy MacKaye: *The Life of Steele MacKaye*, II, 110.
[2] Nicolay and Hay: *Abraham Lincoln*, 545.

enthusiastic soul of John Wilkes Booth, who, after his crime and in a moment of despairful disillusion, declared the South to be an ungrateful people, poems were written in his honor and to his memory, poems which characterized him as of heroic mold. Here are some swinging verses in 'A Tribute to John Wilkes Booth.' Their authorship has been attributed to Judge Alexander W. Terrell, of Texas. They appeared in *The Confederate Veteran*, April, 1913. The poem was taken from an old Southern scrapbook and furnished the present writer through the courteous offices of that virile *littérateur* of the Southland, Harris Dickson. At the time of the poem's composition it was supposed that Booth's body had been carried out to sea and buried in the ocean.

Even at this late date, the sight of any such 'tribute' to *John Wilkes Booth* is enough to strike a chill to many Northern hearts unable still to understand and appreciate the point of view of 'ten millions of people' who believed ardently that they 'stood upon their constitutional rights' in seceding from the Union, and who cannot be unmindful of any one who made sacrifices, however mistakenly, in their behalf. Lincoln, Grant, and Sherman would understand. Always understood. The appearance in print of any such 'tribute' is enough to make Edwin M. Stanton turn in his grave. It is not at all uninteresting to see what the reaction of some Southern people was to Lincoln's assassination.

John Wilkes Booth

A Tribute to John Wilkes Booth

Give him a sepulcher
Broad as the sweep
Of the tidal wave's measureless motion;
In the arms of the deep
Lay our hero to sleep
'Mid the pearls of the fetterless ocean.

It was Liberty slain
That so maddened his brain
To avenge the dead idol he cherished;
So 'tis meet that the main
Ne'er curbed by a chain,
Should entomb the last freeman now perished.

. . . . . .

Then hide him away
From the sad eye of day
'Mid the coral of sea-green abysses,
Where the mermaids so gay,
As they sport 'neath the spray,
May purple his pale lips with kisses.

. . . . . .

He has written his name
In bright letters of fame
In the pathway of Liberty's portal;
And the serfs who now blame
Shall crimson with shame
When they have cursed an immortal.

. . . . . .

Then give him a sepulcher
Broad as the sweep
Of the tidal wave's measureless motion;
In the arms of the deep
Lay our Brutus to sleep,
Since his life was as free as the ocean.

Had John Wilkes Booth succeeded in carrying off Abraham Lincoln from under the noses of the Federal

Government at Washington, and presented him as a gift to the Southern authorities at Richmond, it is not improbable that the history of political government in America would have been greatly altered, and Booth, quite aside from his talents as a tragedian, would have been everywhere admired if not acclaimed for his bold-spirited intrepidity, but with the commission of the atrocious murder to which he was unquestionably driven by mental imbalance, there was lost every possibility that anywhere his name would be thought as having been written 'In bright letters of fame in the pathway of Liberty's portal.' The sorrow of it is that one so gifted and personally so attractive should have been engulfed by an hallucination. Had Booth assassinated Lincoln before the fall of Richmond and Lee's surrender, it is likely, had he escaped to Richmond, that he would have been surrendered to the Federal authorities by the Confederate Government whose leaders were men of integrity and high principles.

It has been said that, from the point of view of Lincoln's fame, John Wilkes Booth, in slaying Lincoln, did him the greatest service. In other words, that Lincoln had exhausted his usefulness to the country and had died at the right moment for his fame. No friend of Lincoln ever said that. It is the poorest possible compliment to the memory of a great man.

The best answer to a statement of that character are these lines from Carl Schurz's essay:

He was the only man who could have guided the nation through the perplexities of the reconstruction period in such a manner as to prevent in the work of peace the revival of the passions of the war.

He would, indeed, not have escaped serious controversy as to details of policy, but he could have weathered it far better than any other statesman of his time, for his prestige with the active politicians had been immensely strengthened by his triumphant reëlection; and, what is more important, he would have been supported by the confidence of the victorious Northern people that he would do all to secure the safety of the Union and the rights of the emancipated negro, and at the same time by the confidence of the defeated Southern people that nothing would be done by him from motives of vindictiveness, or of unreasonable fanaticism, or of selfish party spirit.

'With malice toward none, with charity for all,' the foremost of the victors would have personified in himself the genius of reconciliation.

It was in the South, too, that all the Booth 'doubles' first appeared — the minister, Dr. Armstrong; the desperado, John St. Helen. Recently McCager W. Payne, of Fayettesville, Tennessee, came out with the declaration, in a St. Petersburg, Florida, paper, February 12, 1927, that John Wilkes Booth had married his mother, a widow, on February 25, 1872; that 'a license for the marriage of Mrs. Louise J. Price [Payne's mother] and John W. Booth is on record in the office of the county clerk at Winchester, county seat of Franklin County.'

This Booth passed as the cousin of John Wilkes Booth, but confided to his wife that he was the

assassin. 'True to his theatrical instincts, he appeared before the students of the University of Tennessee in sleight-of-hand performances and readings from plays.' Presently this Booth became anxious to reach New Orleans or Little Rock, Arkansas, to get the fortune, he said, that awaited him for the deed he had committed. His confiding wife accompanied him as far as Memphis, Tennessee, where, according to Payne's story, the rascal disappeared. Many a woman has been imposed upon by a flimsier story.

It was also in Tennessee, at Memphis, that many credulous and some incredulous people viewed the mummified remains of the alleged John Wilkes Booth, the remains of the house-painter, David E. George, brought from Oklahoma by Finis L. Bates. The influence and the circulation of the Bates book — in the South — was thus extended. It is as if the people of that portion of the South were loath to part with the fiction of Booth's escape.

Interest in the whole matter had considerably abated only to be thoroughly revived about a year ago when a popular author lent it a significance and importance by issuing a book which, though full of imaginative charm, was based on the erroneous theories of Bates, theories which had recently been doubly disproved by the splendid investigation and research work of *Harper's Weekly* and *The Dearborn Independent.* Working at different times and at different angles, they added incontestable evidence that the Bates contention was fallacious and untenable.

Notwithstanding which, the myth of Booth's escape from punishment at the hands of the Government is not at all likely to die, perhaps never will die, the reason being that many people do not want it to die. It is a much more enthralling story, much more dramatic with mystery and doubt about it, and mankind loves a mystery.

Lincoln was a Christ who was crucified for his country. Booth was a fanatic who died defiantly for his cause. Lincoln personally was a compound of contrastingly strange and beautiful qualities. Booth personally was a greatly gifted, exquisitely moulded creature with a queer slant in his mental make-up which came to him by inheritance. He was not only elegantly mannered and impressive, but highly impressionable. In another environment he would have been as enthusiastically and radically pro-Union as he became pro-Slavery.

Certainly he was not a common cut-throat. No money on earth could have tempted him either to abduct or murder the President. Nor did he consider either for the sake of mere notoriety, though, being an actor, that has been charged against him. Believing ardently, passionately in the cause of the South, he sought to abduct Lincoln in order to stop the war and so aid the Secessionists. Failing in this, being a fanatic he felt himself ordained of God to kill.

Lincoln had the broad world as his audience and the high principle of his oath of office and man-freedom as his polar star toward which, or by which, he un-

swervingly steered the ship of state. The audience to which Booth played was sectional and comparatively narrow, with economic gain as its object. 'Cotton was king, and cotton would win the war!' 'The Union is not worth a curse,' said a Representative from Louisiana, in 1850, in the House of Representatives, 'as long as distinction exists between negroes and horses';[1] and that doctrine was gospel to John Wilkes Booth.

When the outside world frowned on the South's championship of slavery, little or nothing was said about it by the South after the battle of Bull Run. 'Fighting for home and fireside,' 'Resistance to invasion and confiscation,' and 'Constitutional right to secede,' then became the slogans of the Confederacy.

Centralization of power in the National Government at Washington has advanced so tremendously that it is hard to realize at this period since the war why grave men were influenced at the time to give their swords to the continuance of slavery because their native States had voted to secede from the Union. General Lee loved the Union, but on the outbreak of the Rebellion, he resigned from the army because he could not bring himself to lead an armed force into his native State.

Had Lee been in the field at the time of the assassination and had Booth fled to his lines, it is likely that

[1] Henry Wilson: *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, II, 92. Quoted also by James Ford Rhodes: *History of the United States*, I, 369.

Booth would have found no shelter there. Such was the quality of Lee's mind, it is more than probable that Lee, with authority, would have surrendered Booth to the North. From the beginning, as has been shown, the Confederate Government had spoken strongly against the proposal to abduct or assassinate Federal officials.

This phase of the abduction subject, as to the attitude of the Southern officials in the event of Lincoln's capture, must have been discussed among the conspirators, for we find one of them, Sam Arnold, writing to Booth, saying: 'Why not go to Richmond to see how the Confederate Government will take it?' Booth refrained from going to inquire because he wanted all the glory for himself, and he felt there would be a great deal of glory in working what he fanatically thought was the will of most people both North and South. For the same reason he would not apply to the South for financial aid when his funds ran low. This is at least contributory proof that Richmond knew nothing of Booth's plans either to abduct or to kill.

If Booth could but place Lincoln in the hands of the Confederates at Richmond, he was quite willing to risk the rejection of such a precious gift. Who is there to say that Booth's reasoning here was not acutely correct — that the South would not have found it impossible not to profit by the possession of such an extraordinary prize? How would the North have acted under similar circumstances with Jeffer-

son Davis in its hands, considering that prominent Northern men were advising the hanging of Southern leaders as soon as captured?

If the fanatical player could have got past that small period of blinding rage at Lee's humiliation and Lincoln's triumph, if he could have had but a few nights to sleep over his maniacal determination to kill, he would have lived to be deeply ashamed, as many men both North and South have openly acknowledged themselves, of his feeling toward Lincoln — and slavery.

Could this have been, what a world of misery and sorrow would have been averted! Since the open-minded avowals of many men since what used to be called 'the late unpleasantness,' it would not have been too wide a stretch of the imagination to have known of John Wilkes Booth as a beloved public favorite, and of his having recited to the great Emancipator about 'that time when he plotted to carry him off almost from the front door of the White House,' and of the baffled rage of all his Falstaffian conspirators when they found somebody else instead of Abraham Lincoln in the White House carriage.

Nor is it to be doubted that Lincoln, with his love of a jest and his unmatched magnanimity, would have laughed heartily at what he would have called 'a good story'!

> Of all sad words of tongue or pen
> The saddest are these: 'It might have been.'

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